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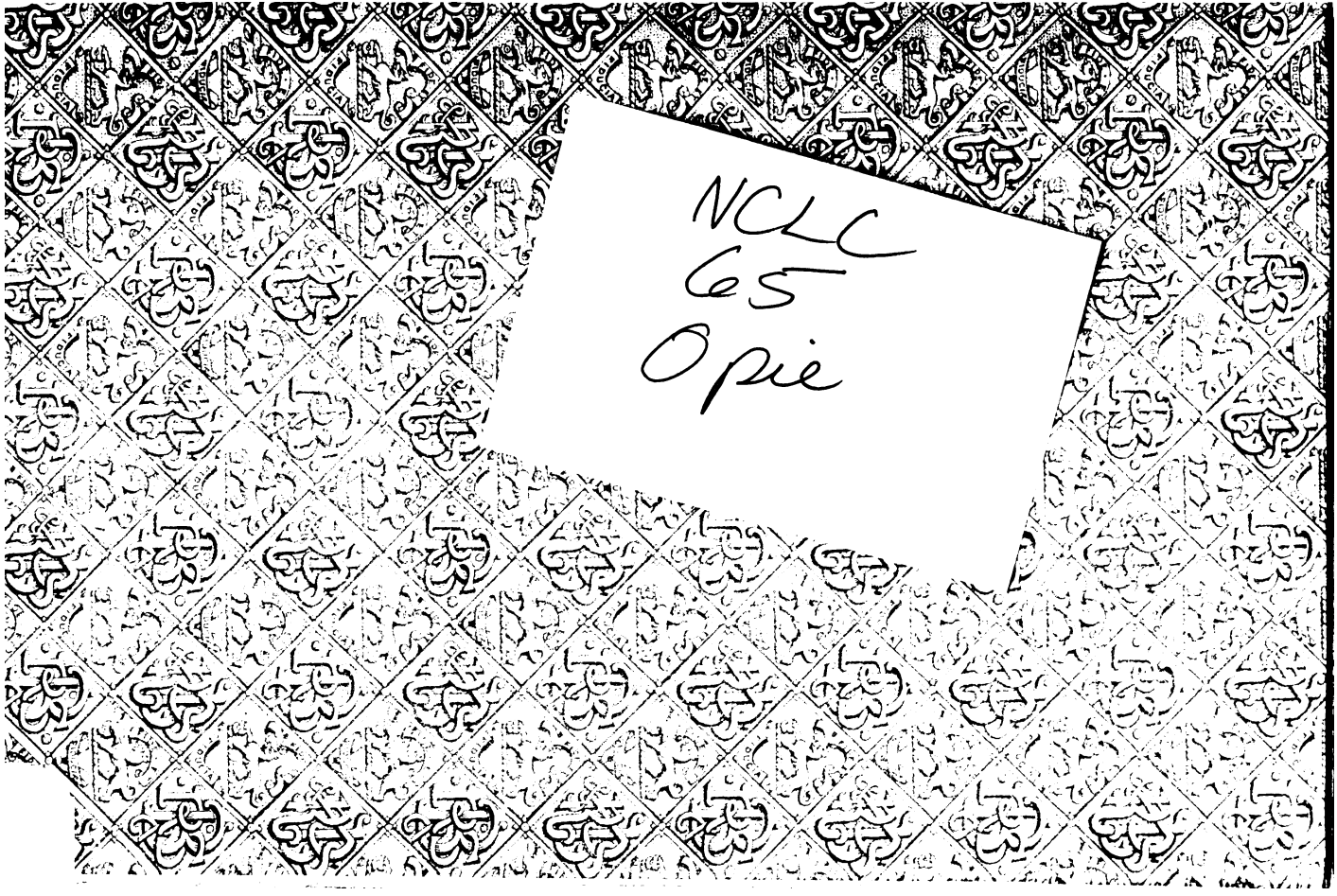
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SYDNEY, LADY MORGAN.

London Richard Bentley and Son 1894.

Women of [illegible]

BY

[illegible] Townshend Mayor.

In Two Volumes.

Vol. II.

London:

Richard Bentley & Son,

Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.

1864.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

	PAGE
ELIZABETH INCHBALD	1
AMELIA OPIE	59
SYDNEY OWENSON, LADY MORGAN	115
MISS MITFORD	163
MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY	207
LADY DUFF GORDON	261

WOMEN OF LETTERS.

ELIZABETH INCHBALD.

GODWIN, condescending for once to epigram, described Mrs. Inchbald as "a piquante mixture between a lady and a milkmaid." Sheridan declared that she was the only authoress whose society pleased him; and the passing glimpses we obtain of her in the memoirs and letters of contemporaries excite the wish that they were fuller and more frequent.

Few things in the annals of biography are more to be regretted than the evil fate which, making a never-to-be-forgiven Dr. Poynter its instrument, robbed the reading world of Mrs. Inchbald's "Memoirs written by Herself," and substituted the materials collected for those memoirs, manipulated afresh by the prosy and pompous James Boaden.

The publishers of the day knew that Mrs. Inch-

bald was compiling her recollections, and competed eagerly for them, offering a thousand pounds without seeing the manuscript, and in one case even proposing to settle an annuity on her. Godwin, who in 1816 offered the memoirs (on Mrs. Inchbald's behalf) to Constable, says that they were actually sold twice, each time for a thousand pounds; but by a strange fatality, the agreements came to nothing. Robinson, with whom the first was made, died before it could be carried out, and his successors asked the author to release them from so great an undertaking, which she did instantly. And Sir Richard Phillips, the second negotiator, became bankrupt before obtaining possession of the manuscript; on which Mrs. Inchbald "locked up her memoirs in her drawer and said no more about it." Godwin assures Constable that "the merit of the work does not consist in its treating of great people and dealing with scandal, but simply in that fascinating naïveté of manner which charmed the whole world in 'The Simple Story,' and which is still more enchanting when employed in relating the life of such a woman." *

The overtures to Constable also fell through, and only a memorandum found amongst her

* "Archibald Constable and his Literary Correspondence." Edmondston and Douglas, 1873. Vol. ii. p. 78

papers rather mysteriously indicates the fate of the precious work.

"*Query.*—What I should wish done at the point of death.
Dr. P.—Do it now.
Four volumes destroyed."

The bright anecdotes and sketches of famous contemporaries that must have flowed from the pen of the author of "The Simple Story," when relating her own chequered career, are lost beyond recall. But it is still possible to disentangle the facts of her life from the wearisome platitudes and yet more intolerable puns of her historian.

Elizabeth, the fairest of several fair daughters of John Simpson, a Roman Catholic farmer living at Standingfield, near Bury St. Edmunds, was born in 1753, only eight years before her father's death. Her mother, who seems to have been a sensible and energetic woman, brought up her large family well, and long carried on the farm, with the assistance of such of her children as remained single.

Four of her daughters married early, and went to live in London, which thenceforward became the land of promise to Elizabeth, who, at thirteen, declared that she "had rather die than not see the world." In early youth, though her charming manner and gay disposition eminently fitted her to be popular in society, she shrank from it

nervously, because of a stammer which in later years was considered only an addition to her many attractions. Yet, oddly enough, her great ambition was to become an actress. With this end in view she persistently endeavoured to improve her enunciation, writing the words which she found most difficult, and carrying them about with her, so that she might lose no opportunity of practising them.

Elizabeth's taste for the drama was shared by all her family: one of their favourite amusements was to read plays aloud, each taking a part. When the theatre at Bury St. Edmunds was open the Simpsons were regular attendants; they made friends among members of the companies performing there, and in 1770 Elizabeth applied to Richard Griffith, manager of the Norwich Theatre, for an engagement. Nothing came of the application then, but a friendly correspondence and an amusing entry in her pocket-book: "R-i-c-h-a-r-d G-r-i-f-f-i-t-h. Each dear letter of thy name is harmony!"

In the same year her brother George exchanged the farm for the stage. His frequent letters, which no doubt dwelt rather on the lights than the shadows of theatrical life, increased Elizabeth's desire to follow the same course.

Visiting Mrs. Hunt, one of her married sisters,

in 1771, Elizabeth became acquainted with Mr. Inchbald, an actor of respectability, who promptly fell in love with her, accompanied her on sight-seeing expeditions, and after her return wrote to her mother and herself what was evidently an offer of his hand.

Her answer was more candid than encouraging:—

"In spite of your eloquent pen," she concludes, "matrimony still appears to me with less charms than terrors . . . to enter into marriage with the least reluctance, as fearing you are going to sacrifice part of your life, must be greatly imprudent. Fewer unhappy marriages, I think, would be occasioned if fewer persons were guilty of this indiscretion —an indiscretion that shocks me, and which I hope Heaven will ever preserve me from; as must be your wish, if the regard that you have professed for me be really mine, of which I am not wholly undeserving; for, as much as the strongest friendship can allow, I am yours—E. Simpson." *

It seems, from some brief but significant entries in her journal, that at this time she was wavering between Mr. Inchbald, who loved her, and Mr. Griffith, whom she fancied she loved:—

"January 22nd.—Saw Mr. Griffith's picture.

"28th.—Stole it.

"29th.—Rather disappointed at not receiving a letter from Mr. Inchbald."

In March she records receiving a note from Mr.

* "Memoirs and Correspondence of Mrs. Inchbald," edited by James Boaden. London: Richard Bentley, 1833. Vol. i. p. 15.

Griffith, which "almost distracted her." Whether its contents were personal or professional does not appear, but undoubtedly it put the finishing touch to her determination to leave home, and as her family, despite their theatrical predilections, had consistently opposed her desire to become an actress, she ran away to London, leaving on her dressing-table—as became a heroine of romance—a farewell letter to her mother.

Elizabeth was then eighteen years old, and very lovely. Even Boaden waxes eloquent in describing her:—

> "She was in truth a figure that could not be seen without astonishment at its loveliness—tall, slender, straight, of the purest complexion and most beautiful features. Her hair of a golden auburn, her eyes full at once of spirit and sweetness; a combination of delicacy that checked presumption and interest that captivated the fancy."

Dreading lest she should be sent back to the farm if any of her family knew where she was to be found, Elizabeth did not join her sisters when she arrived in London "in the Norwich Fly," but went in search of some friends who had been living at Charing Cross, only to find that they had quitted London for Wales. She appears then, if one may judge from an account of her proceedings which Boaden pronounces founded on fact (on the ground that it was published in

her lifetime and not contradicted by her), to have become distraught with nervous excitement, to have run away from houses where she would have been kindly received, to have wandered aimlessly about the neighbourhood of Holborn, and finally to have obtained a room at the "White Swan," under the pretext that she had been disappointed of a seat in the York coach. But her hosts must have regarded her with some suspicion, for they locked her into her room at night!

She remained there, however, living on "a roll or two and a draught of water," until her failure to obtain an immediate theatrical engagement, and her rapidly dwindling funds, frightened her into communicating with her sisters. She then received her mother's forgiveness and help, and met Mr. Inchbald again at the house of her brother-in-law, Mr. Slender.* Some incidents during her negotiations with managers, peculiarly revolting to a girl of her high spirit and natural refinement, no doubt sharpened her appreciation of Mr. Inchbald's unwearied devotion. She had

* The fragments of her diary which escaped destruction contain excellent descriptive touches. She says of her brother-in-law: "Mr. Slender was in reality good-natured, but his good nature consisted in frightening you to death to have the pleasure of recovering you; in holding an axe over your head for the purpose of pronouncing a reprieve."

evidently begun to realize acutely the difficulty of making her way in London alone and unprotected. Two months after her arrival in town they were married by a Catholic priest and afterwards by a Protestant clergyman, and in the evening the bride accompanied Mrs. Slender to the theatre to see the bridegroom act Mr. Oakley in *The Jealous Wife*, which the superstitious might regard as ominous of troubles that only too quickly followed.

Mr. Constable, on the authority of "Chambers' Cyclopædia," gives a curious account of how the marriage came about: "Finding her position not altogether pleasant, she applied to Mr. Inchbald, a brother actor, for advice. On his counselling matrimony, she objected, 'But who would marry me?' 'I would, if you will have me,' he replied. 'That I will,' rejoined she, 'and be for ever grateful to you!'"* This story may have been correct as regards Mr. Inchbald's second proposal, but, taken in conjunction with her letter refusing his first offer, it looks more like a misapplied and garbled version of a reply of Mrs. Inchbald's to Kemble, to be found later.

The day after their marriage they started for

* "Archibald Constable and his Literary Correspondence." Edmondston and Douglas, 1873. Vol. ii. p. 76.

Bristol, where Mr. Inchbald had an engagement, and there, in the September of the same year, Mrs. Inchbald made her first appearance on any stage as Cordelia to her husband's Lear. She must have looked the character enchantingly, but did not, it would seem, declaim it equally well, for she relates many painstaking lessons bestowed on her afterwards by her husband, both indoors and out, wandering over the hills or sitting by the fireside, with a view to curing the mechanical and monotonous utterance she adopted as a precaution against her stammer. She was industrious, and certainly not fastidious as to the parts in which she appeared, for we read of her as Anne Boleyn, one of the witches in *Macbeth*, Jane Shore, a Bacchante in *Comus*, Desdemona, the Tragic Muse in the *Jubilee*, and a long et cetera.*

The seven years of Mrs. Inchbald's married life were chiefly spent in travelling from theatre to theatre in the United Kingdom, sharing her husband's professional labours—a much more arduous existence a hundred years ago than we can easily realize. On one occasion they took ship from Leith to Aberdeen, but encountered such bad weather that, after a night's tossing and terror,

* She once acted Hamlet, for the benefit of her stepson, George Inchbald, to his Horatio, while Suett doubled Rosencrantz and the Grave-digger!

the captain put his passengers ashore at a little village, whence the Inchbalds had to depart on foot—literally "strolling players"—thankful for an occasional lift in a coal-cart.

At Aberdeen, Mrs. Inchbald must have been a favourite; she performed there in thirty characters, from August to November, 1773. She was then only twenty, and her beauty and grace no doubt compensated for the absence of histrionic genius, to which she appears never to have risen.* Her journal shows that both she and her husband possessed tastes and aspirations beyond the limits of their profession. While she was studying French and busying herself with translations, he was painting her portrait and giving her drawing-lessons.

A letter from Digges, manager of the Dumfries Theatre at this period, suggests an occasional conflict between the feelings of the artist and the woman. After asking her to take the part of Zaphira, as he "cannot depend on any other person's attention or punctuality with safety to the welfare of the theatre," he adds—

"I should wish you'd be so good to dress it in a matron-like manner; much depends on that. And if you would

* One charm she seems to have possessed in common with Mrs. Jordan—a spontaneous, infectious, musical laugh. She says that in playing comedy she could not resist laughing much more often than had been set down for her.

suffer your face to be a *little* marked, as I have seen Mrs Woffington's in *Veturia*, it must greatly serve you."

No doubt she complied; at all events, Mr. Digges was so pleased with her that in the following month he presented her with a handsome necklace and pair of earrings. Perhaps as consolation for her temporary disfigurement!

In June, 1776, we are told, while Mrs. Inchbald was playing Jane Shore in the Edinburgh Theatre, "as they expected, there was a riot on Mr. Inchbald's account." Why they should have "expected" a disturbance, or in what way he had incurred the wrath of the canny Scots, is not explained, but the manifestation must have been serious, for the Inchbalds quitted Edinburgh and spent their unpremeditated holiday in a long-desired visit to France.

In Paris, Mrs. Inchbald's grace and intelligence made her popular at once, and the fact that she and her husband were Roman Catholics opened many doors to them. Mr. Inchbald even contemplated establishing himself there as a miniature painter; but he must have quickly changed his mind, for September found them at Brighton, trying for theatrical engagements—difficult to obtain after the Edinburgh disaster—and in such pecuniary straits that they often dispensed with

dinner or tea, and once went into the fields to make a meal of turnips! But wherever they went, and whatever troubles awaited them, Mrs. Inchbald's sweet face and sunny manner always won her friends. In Scotland, the ladies who led the fashion would not attend the theatres unless she played—and in Brighton the fellow-passengers who had crossed from Dieppe with the Inchbalds showed them much attention. In October they obtained engagements at Liverpool which proved in every way fortunate, as they then met Mrs. Siddons, and a friendship began between her and Mrs. Inchbald which lasted nearly fifty years. The Queen of Tragedy was at that time only on the steps of the throne, and her new friend's diary describes her as singing merrily over her household work, which then included the family washing.

Fanny Kemble, who, in two pages of her vivid reminiscences, gives a better idea of Mrs. Inchbald than can be gleaned from Boaden's two heavy volumes, says:—

"She was very beautiful, and gifted with original genius, as her plays and novels testify. She was not an actress of any special merit, but of respectable mediocrity. She stuttered habitually, but her delivery was never impeded by this defect on the stage. Mrs. Inchbald was a person of a very remarkable character, lovely, poor, with unusual mental powers, and of irreproachable conduct. She had a singular uprightness and unworldliness, and a childlike directness

and simplicity of manner, which, combined with her personal loveliness, and halting, broken utterance, gave to her conversation, which was both humorous and witty, a most peculiar and comical charm. Once, after travelling all day in a pouring rain, the dripping coachman offered her his arm to help her out, when she exclaimed, to the great amusement of her fellow-travellers, 'Oh, no, no! Y-y-y-you will give me my death of cold! Do bring me a-a-a-a *dry* man.' . . . Coming off the stage one evening, she was about to sit down by Mrs. Siddons in the green-room, when suddenly, looking at her magnificent neighbour, she said, 'No, I won't s-s-s-sit by you. You're t-t-t-too handsome!' in which respect she certainly need have feared no competition, and less with my aunt than any one, their style of beauty being so absolutely dissimilar." *

Through all her varied experiences, and amidst almost continuous change of scene, Mrs. Inchbald educated herself with admirable perseverance. As a child she had copied and studied the parts in which she desired to appear (such as Cordelia and Hermione); and she left behind her many manuscript volumes of extracts from and abstracts of the books she most attentively read, chiefly histories and biographies; making chronological tables for herself, and noting any fact which might serve as a landmark to memory.† Amongst the books she notes as having read and epitomized

* "Record of a Girlhood." Bentley & Son, 1879. Vol. ii. p. 49.

† These volumes she sent to her younger sisters, whom she was anxious to inspire with tastes resembling her own.

are Chesterfield's "Letters;" Pope's "Essay on Man;" "Gil Blas;" and the "Odes of Horace." All this study of the writings of others led to a desire to become a writer herself, and about this time she traced the outline of her "Simple Story."

The intimacy with Mrs. Siddons grew apace, and included her brother, John Philip Kemble, who soon became, as did almost every male acquaintance, Mrs. Inchbald's sworn friend and champion. It says much for her character and disposition that although so universally admired by men, she also won and retained the affection of all women who knew her intimately. She seems to have had in perfection the indefinable, irresistible gift of pleasing which we call charm.

In 1777, the Inchbalds, Mr. and Mrs. Siddons, Kemble, and two other friends took country lodgings on Russell Moor, and formed a merry family party—walking together in the morning and playing at cards in the evening,* sometimes running out in the sunset to the moor for a game at blindman's-buff or puss-in-the-corner. What a picture it suggests—the red glow in the sky, the broad purple shadows on the heath, and such forms of beauty as Mrs. Siddons, Kemble, and

* Kemble, Mrs. Inchbald says, was clever in card tricks, and had nimble fingers which made toys from wire, wax, thread, or clay, to her infinite amusement.

Mrs. Inchbald racing in and out amongst the gorse and bracken—Hamlet and Lady Macbeth playing with the grace and mirth and abandonment of children!

The more serious aspect of Mrs. Inchbald's many-sided nature is amply manifested in her journal, where she records her correspondence on questions of faith with the enlightened and sympathetic Father Jerningham, whose acquaintance she had made in Paris—her attendance at mass with her husband and friends, and her reading the service in French to Inchbald and Kemble when there was no chapel in the neighbourhood.*

When visiting York for professional purposes, the families still lived together, and shared each other's studies and amusements. Mr. Inchbald carried his paint-box and easel into Mrs. Siddons' room when illness prevented her from leaving it, and Kemble began a course of English History, reading aloud to Mrs. Inchbald, who made notes of the chief facts as she went on. She also began to make an abridgment of the Bible in French.

The pleasant intimacy was broken up by the

* Her diary also contains the following prayer: "Almighty God, look down upon Thy erring creature! Pity my darkness and my imperfections, and direct me to the truth. Make me humble under the difficulties which adhere to my faith, and patient under the perplexities which accompany its practice."

actors being informed against as rogues and vagabonds, and ordered by the magistrates of York to quit the town. The Kemble family departed to Liverpool, and the Inchbalds to Canterbury, with such scanty means that the only meal they could afford for two days was breakfast. Perhaps these long fasts (not dignified by being part of Catholic observance) may to some extent excuse an ebullition of impatience that Mrs. Inchbald penitently relates. Her husband was so busy copying a portrait of Garrick, that he did not immediately obey her call to dinner, on which, with swift vengeance, she tore his copy to pieces!

Even at this time, when her own resources were so limited, Mrs. Inchbald contrived to assist her mother and sister Dolly, who, though still at Standingfield, were less prosperous than formerly; and she then began the course of self-denial, almost amounting to penuriousness, by which she all her life contrived to help her family. It was to obtain the control of some money for this purpose that she incurred the anger of her husband by asking that their salaries might be divided. Her friends, meanwhile, were being roughly used in Liverpool. Kemble writes to her:—

"Madam,—I know you love news. I hope you will find mine entertaining, and excuse my boldness in taking my

sister's employment from her. But why should I endeavour to find excuses for doing what I think an honour to me? Without more preamble, then, our affairs here are dreadful. On Monday night we opened our theatre. Before the play began, Mr. Younger advanced before the curtain if possible to prevent any riot, with which he had publicly been threatened for presuming to bring any company to Liverpool who had not played before the King. In vain did he attempt to oratorize. The remorseless villains threw up their hats, hissed, kicked, stamped, bawled, did everything to prevent his being heard. After being saluted with volleys of potatoes and broken bottles he thought proper to depute Siddons as his advocate, who entered bearing a board large enough to secure his person, inscribed with Mr. Younger's petition to be heard. The rogues would hear nothing, and Siddons may thank his wooden protector that his bones are whole. Mrs. Siddons entered next, P.S., and Mrs. Kniveton, O.P.—*Mais aussi infortunées—hé bien! Madame Kniveton a la mauvaise fortune de tomber dans un convulsion sur les planes!* The wretches laughed. They next extinguished all the lights round the house; jumped on the stage, brushed every lamp out with their hats; took back their money, and left the theatre, determined to repeat this till they have another company. Well, Madam, I was going to ask what you think of all this; but I can see you laughing!"

Amongst other news Kemble tells his friend that he has finished his tragedy (*Belisarius*) and sent it to Harris at Covent Garden, "Who returned it *unopened*, with an assurance that it *would not do*." Six months later, however, it was produced at Hull, Mrs. Inchbald acting in it and speaking the epilogue.

In the following June the Inchbalds and Kemble

visited Halifax, Mr. Inchbald on horseback, and next day (June 6th, 1779) he suddenly expired, it is supposed from disease of the heart. His wife in her diary calls the day "a day of horror," and the week following "a week of grief, horror, and almost despair." It would appear that she was not with him at the time, for she also notes asking Kemble many questions concerning her husband's death.* Their domestic peace had not been unbroken. Mrs. Inchbald was often jealous (Boaden insinuates not without cause), and her light-hearted geniality and love of admiration—joined, perhaps, to a spice of retaliative coquetry—often angered him; though it is well known that all her admirers found a hard and fast line beyond which it was impossible to pass; a line defended on one occasion by a basin of hot-water thrown in the face of an insolent manager.

But despite passing clouds, the Inchbalds' affection for each other was sincere; they had many interests in common; Mr. Inchbald's admiration for his wife and faith in her powers were boundless, and she long and bitterly missed his encouragement and companionship. The first event which roused her from her affliction was the

* Kemble wrote a long and eulogistic Latin inscription for his friend's tomb at Leeds.

arrival of her stepson, George Inchbald, with whom she was on very friendly terms. He became a member of the same company, owing an increased salary to her good offices, and lodged in the same house with her; a few months later he was chosen by Suett the comedian to convey a proposal of marriage to his stepmother—the seriousness of which she found more amusing than any of his stage jokes.

Meantime the world in general, and the theatrical world in particular, married her to Kemble so confidently "that it seemed like disappointing their patrons to avoid or even defer the union." Mr. Fitzgerald, in his "Lives of the Kembles,"* says: "It is probable that Kemble's cautious disposition was not inclined to hamper his career by taking on him fresh responsibilities." Boaden says:—

"We think we know that Mr. Kemble could never have borne with the independent turn of her mind; he could never, we are sure, be blindly fond of any woman; and much as she might have respected him she had a humour that demanded as much indulgence as that of her husband at least. Even as friends to the end of their lives they had frequent differences, looking very like alienation."

This sounds all very true and reasonable, no doubt; but Kemble's social attractions, fine

* Vol. i. p. 79.

presence, and dramatic powers had deeply interested Mrs. Inchbald from the first. They had been domesticated together, and the attraction had but grown stronger; and there is the best authority for believing that there would have been no hesitation on the lady's side.

"On one occasion when Mrs. Inchbald was sitting by the fireplace in the green-room, waiting to be called upon the stage, she and Miss Mellon (afterwards Mrs. Coutts and Duchess of St. Albans) were laughingly discussing their male friends and acquaintances from the matrimonial point of view. My Uncle John, who was standing near, excessively amused, at length jestingly said to Mrs. Inchbald, who had been comically energetic in her declarations of who she could or would, or never could or would, have married, 'Well, Mrs. Inchbald, would you have had me?' 'Dear heart,' said the stammering beauty, turning her sweet, sunny face up to him—'I'd have *j-j-j-jumped* at you!'" *

Of Mrs. Inchbald's financial position at the time of her husband's death her biographer says quaintly:—

"Her circumstances were what is commonly called good, and theatrically perhaps extraordinary. She had £222 Long Annuities, £30 in Consols, and 5*s.* 3*d.* in the Reduced Annuities; besides £128 12*s.* 6*d.* money in hand."

Her salary was under thirty shillings a week, and for her benefits she rarely obtained more than seven pounds. But her expenses were small,

* "Record of a Girlhood," by Frances Ann Kemble. Bentley & Son, 1879. Vol. ii. p. 50.

averaging twelve shillings a week for board and lodging. She lived in comparative seclusion for some little time after her husband's death, and busied herself in finishing her "Simple Story." It was shown to Kemble, George Inchbald, and one or two other friends, and after their favourable verdict was sent to Dr. Brodie, who vainly tried to find a publisher for it. Undaunted by this disappointment, Mrs. Inchbald began to write a farce, scenes from which she read to her friends as she proceeded. She was corresponding with several avowed admirers (Sir John Whitefoord, Dr. Brodie, Colonel Glover, etc.), but had no intention of marrying again.

An engagement at Covent Garden in 1780, although with little advance of salary, opened a new era in her life. She appeared as "Bellario," looking extremely handsome in her page's dress, but speaking timidly, and acting stiffly, and causing some amusement by her reluctance to part with her hat, which she wore throughout, even when presented to the Princess, *except* in the scene in the wood, when she might naturally have kept it on! She was little disturbed by the indifference with which her London *début* was received, being absorbed in completing three farces on which she built high hopes, destined like those

of many of her successors in the same path to speedy and humiliating disappointment. Managers slowly and reluctantly consented even to look at them, and although their unfavourable decisions were prompt enough, there was the usual difficulty and delay in getting them out of their hands.

On her arrival in London Mrs. Inchbald took lodgings at nine shillings a week, where, in spite of limited accommodation and entertainments of the strictest frugality (sometimes, indeed, she mentions that her guests provided their own meals!), she soon gathered round her a large circle of new acquaintances and rejected lovers, whom she generally contrived to turn into staunch friends. One of the latter sent her as a Christmas-box a "History of England," and amongst the former she numbered the Marquis of Carmarthen. Her sister took alarm at this acquaintance, but the greatest indiscretion into which the Marquis led Mrs. Inchbald was accompanying him to a masquerade—the origin of Miss Milner's similar escapade in the "Simple Story," as Kemble is believed to have been the prototype of the austere and dignified Dorriforth, and the heroine's fitful temper and self-will to have been revelations of the author's "inner consciousness."

The next few years were passed in London,

Dublin, and the provinces, in exceedingly hard work, at low salaries, and often entailing the assumption of characters repulsive to her, and what she hated most, "walking in the pantomime." The brightest gleam of encouragement was the purchase of one of her comedies for twenty pounds; the greatest sorrow was the death of her mother in 1783. Through all changes of fortune, her studies were still carried on unweariedly. She made fair progress in astronomy, and in her list of books read we find Homer's "Odyssey," Rollin's "Ancient History," Plato's works, Hook's "Tasso," and "The Wars of Jugurtha."

In 1784 Mrs. Inchbald made her first hit as a dramatic author, Colman purchasing her farce *The Mogul Tale* for a hundred guineas. The authorship was at first concealed, and she found great amusement in hearing the green-room criticisms — generally favourable — and compensation for many struggles in its brilliant success with the public. She acted in it herself, and it was noted that her nervous excitement was so great, that on this one and only occasion she stammered on the stage. As it was in an expression of surprise and alarm, it probably heightened the effect.

In Kemble's letter of congratulation he says:—

"Your uncommon talents having now forced themselves

into notice, will crown you with growing reputation If I could write, I would. I cannot—so you must receive esteem instead of flattery, and sincerity for wit, when I swear there is no WOMAN I more truly admire, nor any MAN whose abilities I more highly esteem."

Her friend Davis paid her a more amusing tribute. "Next to that immortal man, the late Mr. Garrick," he used to say, "Mrs. Inchbald is lord of the ascendant."

Sir Charles Bunbury now became a frequent visitor at Mrs. Inchbald's humble lodgings. And as his name was not exactly a voucher for propriety, jealous people said ill-natured things, which called forth from Harris, the manager, the indignant reply—"That woman Inchbald has solemnly devoted herself to virtue and a garret."

Her next production, the comedy *I'll Tell You What!* accepted and named by Colman, helped her a little way out of the garret. She received £300 for it, and her faithful friends Kemble and his future brother-in-law Francis Twiss carried her in triumph to the City to invest it in the Three per Cents. Twiss had acted the unpopular part of the "candid friend" in some letters commenting on her plays and the sums she demanded for them, in which he unmercifully "quizzed" her "vanity and avarice," and while admitting their

merits laughed at her for believing the exaggerated praises of her flatterers; but she seems to have taken his strictures quite in good part, and when he returned to town resumed her habit of dining with him and Kemble on Sundays, when their evenings were spent in reading aloud to each other, sometimes sermons.

In 1786 Mrs. Inchbald's prosperity and popularity were great. As usual she largely helped her family and friends, and her unmarried sister Dolly was sent for to share her rooms, which were so besieged by visitors that she had literally to lock her doors when she required undisturbed quiet for writing. The charming Miss Farren, afterwards Countess of Derby, was a favourite friend, so were Mrs. Pope and old Mrs. Kemble, the Swiss farmer's daughter from whom Fanny Kemble inherited her longing love for the snow-clad Alps.

Amongst her lovers was Dr. Wolcot, who suspended his Pindaric odes to write sentimental verses, not of the most refined order, to her. A more desirable suitor—indeed, one to whom there could have been no objection, but the somewhat important one that his affection was not returned—was Mr. Glover, a man of good character, fortune, and family, who had fallen in love with Mrs. Inchbald in the first year of her widowhood,

and who twice proposed to her, offering a settlement of £500 a year, and, what was far more essential in her eyes, promising to be as kind to her somewhat exacting and unsatisfactory relations as she was herself.

Boaden attributes her final refusal to an unfortunate preference for Sir Charles Bunbury, whose pertinacious attentions, he says, led Mrs. Inchbald to hope that he meant to make her his wife. It is difficult to understand how so intelligent a woman, so well acquainted with all phases of society, and generally so acute a judge of character, could have deceived herself to such an extent. Sir Charles was at that time divorced from his first wife, the lovely Lady Sarah Lennox,* and Mrs. Inchbald might have been assured that, even had his principles been higher, his matrimonial views, as a man of fashion and a politician, would be very different. For five years their intimate acquaintance was maintained, letters

* Walpole wrote to Sir Horace Mann in a prophetic vein, on hearing of the engagement of his "chief angel." After describing Bunbury's "childish" unreliability and inconsistency in the House of Commons, he adds: "To show himself more a man he is going to marry Lady Sarah Lennox, who is very pretty from exceeding bloom of youth. But as she has no features, and her beauty is not likely to last so long as her betrothed's, he will probably repent this step, like his motions."—"Letters of Horace Walpole." Bentley & Son, edit. 1891. Vol. iii. p. 489.

being constantly exchanged during the intervals between his frequent visits. Sometimes Sir Charles offended her by breaking an appointment or by an appearance of indifference, but he was always forgiven, and Mrs. Inchbald indulged her dream until, in 1791, some very serious explanation took place, which made her extremely melancholy, and Sir Charles was relegated to the position of a mere acquaintance, until his second marriage, after which the diary records many visits to and from Sir Charles and Lady Bunbury. Mrs. Inchbald generally made friends of the wives of her old admirers.

During those years of delusion Mrs. Inchbald sadly needed the kind and wise support which Mr. Glover might have afforded her. Too warm a heart and too open a hand led her to make some undesirable acquaintances, whom she could not be induced to give up on the ground of a prudence which she considered selfish; and made her the prey of all the impecunious.

Her brother George, who had married an actress, but quitted the stage on his mother's death for the farm at Standingfield, failed disastrously. Mrs. Inchbald had settled her own share of what her mother had to leave on her sisters, but this by no means relieved her from family calls. Mr. Twiss

came to the rescue of her brother, whose difficulties were beyond her unaided arbitration. Her stepson, George Inchbald, of whom she had been very fond, made several starts in life, failing in all, and coming to her at each crisis for assistance: and her own health had for many years been so fluctuating, and her frequent illnesses so severe, that it is astonishing that she could have found strength for her continuous labours as author and actress.

In 1786 she produced, under Colman's auspices, a successful farce called *The Widow's Vow.* She was at that time living in the second floor of the house that had been Buttons' Coffee House, and her imagination may have found something stimulating in the associations with Steele and Addison and their brother wits by which she was surrounded.

Her play of *Such Things Are*, put on the stage by Harris in the following year, and ordered by George III. and Queen Charlotte on the sixth night, was founded to a certain extent on the career of the then living philanthropist Howard, called by her Haswell. One of the incidents in the play is the theft of Haswell's pocket-book by a slave in a dungeon which he is visiting on his errands of charity. It was an odd coincidence that Howard himself returned to England while

this drama was running, and that during the coach journey from Canterbury he was robbed of a case containing papers and jewels.

A translation from the French play *Guerre Ouverte*, called by Mrs. Inchbald *The Midnight Hour*, was her next triumph, to the wrath of Lady Wallace and the courteously expressed disappointment of Mr. MacMahon, each of whom was engaged in translating the same comedy.

It is not possible to follow Mrs. Inchbald step by step through the work and pleasure of the next few years, but one entry in her journal for 1788 is too characteristic to be passed over :—

"On the 29th of June (Sunday) dined, drank tea, and supped with Mrs. Whitfield. At *dark* she and I and her son William walked out. I rapped at doors in New Street and King Street and ran away."

Kemble's "dear Muse" had then arrived at the responsible age of thirty-five.

Hard-working women—and men too—especially the brain-workers in all departments, frequently find their most disinterested and generous friends in their doctors; and 1788 also inaugurated Mrs. Inchbald's friendship for Dr. Warren, who, first consulted by her on professional subjects only, soon became one of her most trusted admirers: and whom she grew to regard with such romantic

tenderness that she would walk up and down Sackville Street at night merely to see whether there were lights in his rooms, and his shadow might cross the blinds. Having been told that a certain shop-window contained a portrait of her physician, she ran out before breakfast to look at it; purchased it a few days afterwards, and entered in her journal :—

"Read, worked, and *looked at my print.*"

Notwithstanding all her toils and all her successes, she was so handicapped by the incessant demands made upon her, principally by her sisters Dolly and Debby (the former apparently helpless, the latter worthless), that her home at this time was a single room up two pair of stairs in Frith Street, in which she sat with her shutters closed, that no distraction from without should withdraw her thoughts from work. Here her familiar friends were sometimes admitted, whilst titled visitors and others on ceremonious terms were shown into her landlady's drawing-room.

Soon after settling in London Mrs. Inchbald met that singular man Thomas Holcroft, ex-cobbler, democrat, dramatist, journalist, novelist, who, like every one who saw her, was interested and charmed. He gave her much advice, some good, some bad, with regard to her plays, and

introduced her to a large and mixed group of acquaintances. Their friendship knew many vicissitudes. Sometimes they quarrelled, sometimes they parted for ever, sometimes he addressed her in verses breathing passionate admiration. On one occasion she broke off her acquaintance with him, disapproving of a novel he had just published. But when, shortly afterwards, he was committed to Newgate for high treason, she immediately took Robinson the publisher there to visit him, and see what could be done to alleviate his captivity.

Godwin, as we have seen, was also a member of her London circle, and she speedily took a prominent place in that cluster of brilliant and beautiful women, leading unconventional lives under conditions of intellectual and personal independence more unusual then than they would be now, his friendship for whom partook of the jealous ardour of passion, and was in strong contrast to the cold philosophy on which he piqued himself. In 1790, Godwin read and criticized her "Simple Story," and Mr. Kegan Paul says its "plot was in a measure altered in deference to his advice." One would like to know what were the changes made in that charming tale at his suggestion. It was published in

the following year by Robinson, who gave her £200 for it, Woodfall (of *Junius* notoriety) being the printer in the first place. His famous newspaper, according to Boaden, interfered with other business, and Mrs. Inchbald's novel was transferred to Cooper; but she continued on amicable terms with Woodfall, and mentions with pleasure a day spent at his beautiful house at Barnes.

The "Simple Story," appeared in February, and a second edition was ordered in March. It has become a classic, and nothing need here be said in praise of its pathos, its knowledge of human nature, and the epigrammatic touches in which it abounds. The novel brought her not only money and fame, but a flock of new friends, amongst whom were Mr. Phillips, the King's surgeon, and his family, and Mrs. Dobson (the translator of Petrarch), who presented Mrs. Inchbald with an Æolian harp.

In curious contrast with the lists of noble and wealthy admirers who now sought her acquaintance, we read of her distress and perplexity when compelled to leave her Frith Street garret owing to the bankruptcy of her landlady. At last she found an unfurnished room in Leicester Fields, in the house of a man appropriately (to her dramatic pursuits) named Shakespear. The servant was

not allowed to give the new lodger any assistance, and she plaintively chronicles—"I was above an hour striking a light; fetched water up three pair of stairs, and dropped a few tears into the stream as any other wounded *deer* might do." But there were alleviations. Sir Joshua Reynolds was her opposite neighbour, and she delighted in the "enclosed plantation, with private walks," which formed the centre of the square.

Mrs. Shelley, in the notes she appended to her father's papers, when she contemplated writing his biography, comments on the conflicting elements which made Mrs. Inchbald's life and character so interesting:—

"Living in mean lodgings, dressed with an economy allied to penury, without connections, and alone, her beauty, her talents, and the charm of her manners gave her entrance to a delightful circle of society. Apt to fall in love and desirous to marry, she continued single because the men who loved and admired her were too worldly to take an actress and a poor author, however lovely and charming, for a wife. Her life was thus spent in an interchange of hardship and amusement, privation and luxury. Her character partook of the same contrast. Fond of pleasure, she was prudent in her conduct; penurious in her personal expenditure, she was generous to others. Vain of her beauty, the gown she wore was not worth a shilling. Very susceptible to the softer feelings, she yet could guard against passion; and though she might have been called a flirt her character was unimpeached."*

* "William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries." King & Co., 1876. Vol. i. p. 74.

Her next production was *The Wedding Day*, written for Mrs. Jordan, who was pleased with it, and purchased by Sheridan for £200.* In 1792 she resisted Kemble's persuasions to accept an engagement at Drury Lane, and devoting her thoughts to authorship, wrote herself, at the close of the year—"Cheerful, content, and sometimes rather happy."

Her next comedy, *Every One Has His Fault*, produced at Covent Garden in January, 1793, with brilliant success, was attacked in the *True Briton* for containing seditious sentiments. She defended herself with spirit in one of Woodfall's papers, and the controversy occasioned an immense sale for the play when published by Robinson.

When living in Leicester Square she received a visit from Mrs. Opie, then Amelia Alderson, who told Mrs. Taylor, her accomplished Norwich friend and correspondent, that she found Mrs. Inchbald—

"As pretty as ever, and much more easy and unreserved in her manner than when I last saw her. With her we passed an hour, and when I took my leave she begged I would call on her again. She is in charming lodgings, and

* There was a delay (puzzling to any one unacquainted with Sheridan) in the payment for this farce. At last Kemble called to explain that the manager had *lost* it, and if she would send another copy, the money should be forthcoming. For a wonder, it was.

has just received two hundred pounds from Sheridan for a farce containing sixty pages only." *

Mrs. Inchbald's second novel, "Nature and Art," published in 1793, never attained the popularity of the "Simple Story;" it is hardly more than known by name now. But Leigh Hunt quotes some powerful scenes from it, and says, "Passages more beautiful and pathetic than those which we have selected are not to be found in the whole range of English prose." †

A great sorrow, to which was added the sting of self-reproach, befell her this year, in the death, under deplorable circumstances, of her sister Debby. Mrs. Inchbald had helped her repeatedly; but on one occasion, disgusted at the mode of life from which no arguments or persuasions could withdraw her, she refused to see her. On hearing of Debby's illness, Mrs. Inchbald hastened to supply her with every possible help and comfort; but after its fatal termination she bitterly reproached herself for having once turned her sister from her door, when she was "a suppliant and perhaps a penitent." Another family tragedy occurred in the following year. Her brother George, after his failures as actor and farmer, had

* "Memorials of the Life of Amelia Opie," by Cecilia Lucy Brightwell. Second edition. Longmans, 1854. Page 43.

† "Book for a Corner." Bohn. Vol. i. p. 130.

been living for some time in an inn at Hamburg with a friend named Webber. They quarrelled, fought a duel, and George was shot dead. Webber was captured and imprisoned.

Mrs. Inchbald saw much of the Kembles at this time, and accompanied Mrs. Kemble to Stanmore Priory, where the Marquis and Marchioness of Abercorn (always ready to add a new lion or lioness to their menagerie) were entertaining Sir George Beaumont and other visitors.* Lord Abercorn soon called on Mrs. Inchbald after her visit to the Priory. He was a sworn admirer of beauty and originality, and must have fallen under the spell of whose potency Mrs. Shelley says:—

"I have heard that a rival beauty pettishly complained that when Mrs. Inchbald came into a room and sat in a chair in the middle of it, as was her wont, every man gathered round it, and it was vain for any other woman to attempt to gain attention."

It is not surprising to find that she was soon again one of the guests at Stanmore Priory.

* Fanny Kemble relates an amusing encounter with one of Mrs. Inchbald's acquaintances in the "great" world: "An aristocratic neighbour of hers, driving with his daughter in the vicinity of her very humble residence, overtook her walking along the road one very hot day, and, stopping his carriage, asked her to let him have the pleasure of taking her home. She instantly declined, with the characteristic excuse that she had just come from the market gardener's, 'And, my Lord, I—I—I have my pocket f-f-full of onions'—an unsophisticated statement of facts which made them laugh extremely."

Amongst Mrs. Inchbald's papers was one written about this time, and indorsed in her own writing, "Description of Me." Boaden attributes it to Charles Moore, who will be heard of again later.

"*Age:* between thirty and forty, which in the register of a lady's birth means a little turned of thirty. *Height:* above the middle size and rather tall. *Figure:* handsome and striking in its general air, but a little too stiff and erect. *Shape:* rather too fond of sharp angles. *Skin:* by nature fair, though a little freckled, and with a tinge of sand, which is the colour of her eyelashes, but made coarse by ill-treatment upon her cheeks and arms. *Hair:* of a sandy auburn, and rather too straight as well as thin. *Face:* beautiful in effect, and beautiful in every feature. *Countenance:* full of spirit and sweetness; excessively interesting, and, without indelicacy, voluptuous. *Dress:* always becoming, and very seldom worth so much as eightpence."

Mrs. Inchbald never appeared to less advantage than on the death of Mary Wollstonecraft, which occurred in 1797. She strongly disapproved of Godwin's marriage to the author of "The Rights of Woman," for reasons not made clear in Mr. Kegan Paul's account of the quarrel that followed; but, if Godwin's own letters speak correctly, her conduct was certainly ungenerous, and her letters to him after his wife's death are singularly unsympathetic, and compare ill with Godwin's dignified expression of heartfelt grief. She tells him in effect that he will very soon forget his

sorrow, and that had Mrs. Godwin lived longer he might have added remorse to regret!

Lawrence was now one of Mrs. Inchbald's friends, and painted her portrait, as did several less famous artists. Rogers, too, sharp-tongued, but kind-hearted and generous beyond contemporary belief, was much interested in her. Curran, after sending her "his admiration," called at her rooms, and made an attempt to reconcile her to Godwin, not at that time effectual.

The result of this interposition was a letter from Godwin, in which, after saying that Curran had urged him to call on Mrs. Inchbald, but that he "had not courage to take the advice," he adds—

"I determined to request your acceptance of a copy of my novel, and to ask you seriously whether you did not think two years' banishment expiation sufficient for a reproach which you, slowly and reluctantly on my part, wrung from me, at a period the most painful and agonizing in human life."

Mrs. Inchbald for once was untrue to her sweet and generous nature, when she unrelentingly replied—

"With the most sincere sympathy in all you have suffered, with the most perfect forgiveness of all you have said to me, there must nevertheless be an end to our acquaintance *for ever*. I respect your prejudices, but I also respect my own."

She had, it would seem, rather a habit of parting

from her friends, both men and women, "for ever," when they provoked her a little more than usual. They were generally taken into favour again sooner or later, and towards Godwin she so far relented as to write to him an amusingly "double-edged" congratulation on his tragedy of *Antonio:*

"I most sincerely wish you joy of having produced a work which will protect you from being classed with the successful dramatists of the present day, but will hand you down to posterity amongst the honoured few who, during the past century, have totally failed in writing for the stage." *

Mrs. Inchbald, comments Mr. Kegan Paul, "certainly excelled most of her sex in the power of saying a disagreeable thing in the most irritating manner"! Let us, however, set against this note her cordial praise of "Caleb Williams," of which she wrote to Godwin, after some trifling strictures:—"If I find fault it is because I have no patience that anything so near perfection should not *be* perfection."

Lady Cork invited Mrs. Inchbald to dinner, in a characteristic note, adding—

"I should have done myself the pleasure of calling on you, but my carriage is painting, and I hate a chair in the morning or walking the streets when people are about. I

* "William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries." King & Co., 1876. Vol. ii. p. 77.

would walk to you any morning, at or before eleven o'clock, if you would admit me, but I suspect your time is better employed than in paying and receiving morning visits."

The beautiful Duchess of Devonshire made an appointment with her in Kemble's box, but, as was frequently the case with that erratic though fascinating woman, was detained, and sent Lady Elizabeth Foster "in her place." * Mrs. Inchbald was present at most of the fashionable gatherings of the day, including a grand masquerade, for which, she wrote to an intimate friend, she meant to be—

"At no expense at all. My domino is lent me. Have you an old blue handkerchief, or an old blue sash, or anything of a light-faded blue you can lend me, to decorate my faded person? *Observe*—anything blue! A blue work-bag, a blue pin-cushion, or a pair of blue garters I can fasten about me somewhere."

Obviously the character she meant to sustain was that of a "Blue Stocking."

In the midst of all this gaiety Mrs. Inchbald was at the call of every one in sickness or want: her money, her sympathy, her time, were always being demanded. She even nursed through a sharp illness the servant of the very landlady who had so ungraciously refused to allow a pail of water to be carried upstairs for her. A letter of

* Lady Elizabeth afterwards "took her place" in a more important sense—becoming the Duke of Devonshire's second wife.

this period shows the sharp contrasts of her life :—

"I have been very ill indeed, but since the weather has permitted me to leave off making my fire, scouring the grate, sifting the cinders, and all the *et-cetera* of going up and down three long pair of stairs with water or dust, I feel quite another creature. . . . I am both willing and able to perform hard bodily labour, but then the fatigue of being a fine lady the rest of the day is too much for any common strength. Last Thursday I finished scrubbing my bedroom while a coach with a coronet and two footmen waited at the door to take me for an airing. . . . At Lady Cork's the other evening I believe I was the only person (except the Jekylls) without a title."

She goes on to describe some private theatricals, at a great house, in which she was urged to take part: "I positively protested that I would not act except with women older than myself. My age was asked. I stated fifty. There was then the greatest difficulty to find any woman so old." This seems to have been got over, however, for she gives other particulars :—

"The drama fixed on has a supper in it, and I represented that the hurry of clearing the table (one of the comic incidents) will probably break the wine-bottles and throw the hot dishes against the beautiful hangings of the room. The lady of the house, alarmed at my remark, cried out that she would have everything counterfeit, and, ringing for her butler, ordered him to bespeak a couple of wooden fowls, a wooden tongue, wooden jellies, and so forth. 'Nay,' cried Monk Lewis (who is one of the performers), 'if your ladyship gives a wooden supper the audience will say all your

actors are sticks!' It was not less entertaining to see the surprise of the grave elderly butler. He knew there was a supper to be given to the company *after* the play, but did not understand that there was also to be one *in* it; and with great humility represented that 'he thought the company would like a *real* supper better.'"

In 1803, ill-health, and exhaustion from nursing others, compelled Mrs. Inchbald to give up her solitary struggles in Leicester Square, and go to Annandale House, Turnham Green, where fourteen Roman Catholic ladies resided, having separate bedrooms, but sharing the sitting-rooms and garden, and as a rule taking their meals together. Writing to Mrs. Phillips, she says:—

"Everything is clean in perfection—even *my hands!* which, Heaven knows, they have not been before for many a day; and I don't know whether this doesn't constitute one of my chief comforts. . . . Yet do not think I have forgot my affection for London—no; it is great consolation to me to plan that, 'if Buonaparte should come, and conquer,' I may then, without reproach, stand with a barrow of oranges and lemons in Leicester Square and have the joy to call that place my *home*."

Bonaparte did not come, but Mrs. Inchbald went. The lady who presided over Annandale House had a violent temper, and Mrs. Inchbald's was not a patient one; a few months later found her in lodgings in the Strand.* She then resumed

* Her letters describe a tragedy seen from her eyrie, when a child fell from its mother's arms into the Thames, and the father, jumping

her play-writing and theatre-going, and went to see young Betty (though she "hated prodigies"), who was acting in her *Lovers' Vows*, an adaptation of Kotzebue's play. She allowed him some merit, but was indignant at the vulgar want of taste which exalted him above her friends the Kembles, her interest in whom never abated.

'Mrs. Siddons is restored as by a miracle," she tells Mrs. Phillips: "she had a nervous affection from her hip to her toe which made that side wholly useless, yet in torturing pain that kept her sleepless for months. She heard of a new-invented machine that performed cures by electricity. Her physicians told her that such an operation would make her disorder still worse. Her surgeon, Sir James Earle, said no, but it would do her no good. On his word, fearing no harm, she tried it, and was almost instantly cured. But she suffered agony in the trial, as if burning lead was running through her veins where the sparks touched. And Mr. Siddons says her shrieks were such that he really expected the mob would break open the door and think he was killing her."

In 1808, Mrs. Inchbald wrote to Samuel Rogers, who greatly admired her "Nature and Art":—

"I consider myself so much obliged to you for the

in, succeeded in saving it, but was drowned himself. And they also give a comic picture of the interior of the room: "My apartment is so small that I am black and blue with thumping against my furniture on every side. I can kindle my fire as I lie in bed, and put on my cap as I dine, for the looking-glass is obliged to stand on the same table as my dinner. But then I have a great deal of fresh air; more daylight than most people in London; and the enchanting view of the Thames, the Surrey hills, and three windmills."

attention you paid me in calling yesterday that I cannot resist my desire to apologize for your reception. For the sake of a romantic view of the Thames I have shut myself in an apartment which will not admit of a second person. It is therefore my wish to be thought never at home. But when the scruples of the persons who answer for me baffle this design, and I have received a token of regard which flatters me, I take the liberty thus to explain my situation." *

Some of Mrs. Inchbald's letters at this time give pathetic expression to her loneliness.

"My evenings now begin to be dull; they are so long, and no *fire* to cheer them. . . . I have no evening's reward for the labour of the day, and in that I am poorer than the poorest wife or mother in the world. All the entertainment I require is the exchange of a few sentences, and that I sometimes do not obtain for days together. My sister's illness will most likely keep me here some time longer, for in this house my decreased expenses do not suffer me to feel the weight of hers."

It was a curious return to the associations of childhood which made her, this year, inquire into the prospect of profit from

"A little piece of ground of the value of one to three thousand pounds. . . . I do not care how small a farm I am the mistress of, provided it will keep me a cow, a sheep, a pig, and a donkey, in case of invasion or other perilous event to the Bank of England."

In the same year Mr. Hoppner wrote to her announcing the establishment of the *Quarterly Review*, and requesting that she would become

* "Rogers and his Contemporaries," by P. W. Clayden. Smith, Elder & Co., 1880. Vol. i. p. 46.

a contributor; a letter from John Murray confirmed the proposal, but she declined it after some hesitation; and when John Bell invited her to conduct his magazine, *La Belle Assemblée*, she said she had done with the fashionable world, and thought only of a better.

In the following February Mrs. Inchbald writes:—

"I saw nothing of the conflagration of Covent Garden Theatre, but was a miserable spectator of all the horrors of Drury Lane. . . . I love sublime and terrific sights, but this was so terrible I ran from it; and in my own room was astonished by a prospect more brilliantly and calmly celestial than ever met my eye. No appearance of fire from my window except the light of its beams; and this was so powerful that the river, the houses on its banks, the Surrey hills beyond, every boat upon the water, every spire of a church, Somerset House and its terrace on this side—all looked like an enchanted spot, such as a poet paints in colours more bright than nature ever displayed in this foggy island."

Dolly Simpson seemed to be improving a little in the early spring, and in May Mrs. Inchbald took her in a coach to visit their only surviving sister, Mrs. Hunt. She saw Dolly nearly every day until the 5th of June, when she left her, apparently as well as usual; but returning next day, she was shocked to find her dead. Dolly had never been a companion or help, and always more or less a burden, to Mrs. Inchbald, but she

deeply mourned and long missed her, especially as she found from her diaries and letters that Dolly had loved her more than she ever admitted in words.*

At fifty-five, Mrs. Inchbald began to withdraw herself from society, to refuse invitations, and shut out visitors.

"I have had my full share of the world," she tells Mrs. Phillips—"a busy share from fifteen to fifty. I should want taste did I not now enjoy that variety in life which I gain by solitude. Still, a medium has ever been wanting, both in my public and private life, to give a zest of true enjoyment. I had thirty-five years of perpetual crowd and bustle. I have now had five of almost continual loneliness and quiet —extremes justified only by necessity. Do not imagine you can render me, with all your praises, satisfied with my personal attractions; though you know me so well as to know such things would be more gratifying to me than any other gifts in the world.† Nor do not suppose you can

* A letter to Mrs. Opie gives a touching instance of Mrs. Inchbald's tenderness for Dolly:—"I have not been from London yet, and I purposely did not date my letter, because I wished to have no presents this year, and had not time to explain why. My sister has been very ill again, and is in that kind of weak state that she now never comes to see me, and I fear much the winter may prove fatal to her. She always partook of your presents, and I had rather not be reminded of the loss I feel from the want of her occasional visits by having any feasts during her absence."

† Mrs. Inchbald was very womanly in her weaknesses. A curious fragment found among her papers, and headed "Account of my Septembers," contains the following quaint entries, amongst many others: "1797, London . . . after an alteration in my teeth, and the death of Dr. Warren—yet far from unhappy. 1798, London. Rehearsing *Lovers' Vows*. Happy, but for sus-

alarm me by representing the state of *apathy* as a calamity. It is the *blessing* of old age—it is the substitute for patience. It permits me to look in the glass without screaming with horror, and to live upon moderate terms of charity with all young people (without much hatred or malice) although *I* can never be young again."

She had still some compensations in these declining years: she discovered the utility and delightfulness of a Circulating Library. The Edgeworths, father and daughter, opened a pleasant correspondence with her, and she could not fail to be gratified by the younger novelist's cordial praise of her "Simple Story;" and though her nerves suffered from the "groans, yells, and cheers" of the "O. P. rioters" as they passed her doors, and all her sympathies were with the managers, one suspects that she would not willingly have been quite out of the way of the excitement.

A more painful shock was the death of Sir John Moore, of whose family she had heard many particulars from his brother Charles, one of her warmest admirers in former days.

"Never mother doted on her children," she tells Mrs. Phillips, "as Mrs. Moore doted on her eldest son, the General, and her youngest child, the barrister. They were neither of them married—she had therefore more than ordinary love and attention from them both. Within ten months Charles, the barrister, my old acquaintance, was

picion amounting almost to certainty of a rapid appearance of age in my face."

seized with brain fever; she was his nurse for three months; and at the end of five he was sent bound hands and feet to a private madhouse. . . . Not the slightest hope remains of their mother's recovery. All her children are now at her house except poor Charles. She takes no nourishment, nor says a word since this last fatal stroke but 'Don't leave me!' She is seventy-three, but the most beautiful old woman that ever was seen, or poor Charles has made me believe so by his praises of her beauty and maternal virtues."

A series of letters from Charles Moore, found among her papers and printed by Boaden, show that when Mrs. Inchbald had attained the mature age of forty-two this then brilliant and prosperous young man did his utmost to induce her to marry him. The first letter quoted by Boaden is dated "Temple, July 5, 1796." After telling her of some strong professional encouragement received from Lord Lauderdale, he continues—

"In order to show me that you wish me joy, pray have the goodness to let me have a walking conversation with you on the earliest day you can conveniently. I like you a thousand times better in the air than in the house. . . . I walked twice to the Bank to-day, in hopes of meeting a certain animated figure in vain. I got the character of impudence by staring under the bonnet of every woman I came near; but I saw no face whose whole artillery of features I would not have bartered for one arch glance from the hazel eyes of Dolly's sister."

Later, from Lower Grosvenor Street, he writes:—

"Yesterday a gentleman told me that he had met you lately at dinner. 'Did she say anything about me?' asked I. 'Yes, she asked very kindly about you.' 'Did not she look very pretty?' 'She was by far the prettiest woman in the room.' 'And the youngest?' 'Upon my soul,' said he, 'I never thought about that.' . . . He praised you for the very things you would like to be praised for (genius, etc., being always understood)—your exquisite simplicity of manner and dress. . . . My eldest brother" [afterwards Sir John Moore], "one of the most steady and honourable men I have ever known, has just taken leave of us to go to the West Indies. My poor mother is miserable, and has only her pride in his acknowledged fine qualities to comfort her."

Again, from the Temple:—

"You must rejoice with me in the very delightful accounts we have of my brother the General. St. Lucia is taken and he is extolled by the whole army for courage and skilful conduct. My father is wild with joy; and my mother has been doing nothing but thanking God and kissing us ever since she heard the news. Your company is delightful to me: I wish I could inspire you with half the pleasure with respect to mine, and then you would not complain so grievously that life is a burden to you. You should never light a candle only for the pleasure of putting it out with cold water . . . I am not given to protestations. You know me perhaps better than I do myself. Do you think I shall be wanting in gratitude? Do you think that the beauties of real and superior excellence of heart, head, and form will ever cease to maintain the power you have innocently and in spite of yourself gained over me? Have I talked nonsense? If I have, laugh at me, but be sure to forgive me. . . . The most absurd thing you know about me is, obstinately continuing to think you young and pretty!"

At last Mrs. Inchbald told him that his youth was the only fault she had to find with him, but it

was an insuperable one; and she very wisely refused to be laughed, persuaded, or argued out of that objection, though her affectionate regard for him was great.

Again Mrs. Inchbald had to change her rooms, and this time she thought herself delightfully settled, with a view of Hyde Park. But she had not occupied her new apartments many days when she found that *her* landlord was in a state of siege from *his* landlord and next-door neighbour, the Reverend Mr. Este, who wanted to serve some document on him in order to obtain possession of the house. After a "dreadful knocking," to which no response was obtained, the wrathful clergyman struck terror to her soul by shouting—"Where is the woman on the first floor? I can see her!" ("My shutters," says Mrs. Inchbald, "had been closed the whole morning.") "And I know who she is! Mrs. Inchbald! Mrs. Inchbald! Mrs. Inchbald!" The demonstration attracted a mob, and a gun was pointed from the window above hers—but luckily there was no bloodshed. "How little," she pathetically observes, "do those persons possessed of houses and servants know of the difficulties and dangers we poor lodgers experience every time we remove to a new lodging!"

The Twisses and the Kembles she still visited,

and at their houses she met Lady Cork and many old friends; while Mrs. Opie, Mrs. Cosway, and one or two other brave spirits would take no denial, but forced their way into her retreat.

Mrs. Inchbald was drawing closer and closer, as years advanced, to the Church of which she had never been wholly neglectful, though its observances had sometimes been relaxed in the hurry of work and pleasure; her removal to Kensington afforded many opportunities for attending its services, both in the Catholic Chapel in Holland Street and in the chapel of Kensington House, where Mass was celebrated daily by the Archbishop of Jerusalem.

Her confessors seem now to take the place in her affectionate and confidential friendship formerly occupied by her physicians (a long procession, only one of whom, Dr. Warren, has been mentioned here). Father Gaffey, a hard-working poor priest, falling seriously ill, she furnished him with all necessary comforts, though she was obliged to deny herself a servant in order to increase the annuity she paid Mrs. Hunt. As usual, she was called upon to find situations for all her unprosperous nieces and nephews, which could not have been an agreeable task, as some of them were only competent to undertake the duties of barmaids and gamekeepers.

An interview, which must have brought all her dramatic sympathies and all her love for France (she was so ardent a Bonapartist as to be disappointed by the result of Waterloo) back in full force, took place when Talma accompanied Kemble to her lodgings. No record of their conversation has been preserved.

The most interesting literary encounter of these later years was a meeting with Madame de Staël, arranged by Mrs. Opie. "Corinne" was, said Mrs. Inchbald,

"inquisitive as well as attentive, and entreated me to explain to her the motive why I shunned society. 'Because,' I replied, 'I dread the loneliness that will follow.' 'What! will you feel your solitude more when you return from this company than you did before you came hither?' 'Yes.' 'I should think it would elevate your spirits. Why will you feel your loneliness more?' 'Because I have no one to tell that I have seen *you*. No one to describe your person to. No one to whom I can repeat the many encomiums you have passed on my "Simple Story." No one to enjoy your praises but myself.' 'Ah! you have no children,' and she turned to an elegant young woman, her daughter, with a pathetic tenderness.* She then so forcibly depicted a mother's joys that she sent me home more melancholy at the comparison of our situations in life than any contrast between riches and poverty could have made me. I called by appointment at her house two days after. I was told she was *ill*. Next morning my paper explained her illness. You have seen the death of her son in the papers? He was one of Bernadotte's aides-de-camp. The

* Albertine de Staël, afterwards Duchesse de Broglie.

most beautiful young man that ever was seen—only nineteen.* A duel with sabres, and the first stroke literally *cut off his head!*"

A great sorrow befell Mrs. Inchbald herself a few years later, which is best described in her own touching words:—

"Many a time this winter, when I cried with cold, I said to myself, 'But, thank God, my sister has not to stir from her room; she has her fire lighted every morning. She would be less able to bear what I bear, and how much more should I suffer, but from this reflection!' It almost made me warm when I reflected that *she* suffered no cold. And yet perhaps the severe weather affected her, for after only two days of dangerous illness she died. I have now buried my whole family—I mean my Standingfield family, the only part to which I felt tender attachment. She died on February 14th [1816], aged 74."

In the same month of the same year Rogers invited Mrs. Inchbald to accompany him to Byron's box at Drury Lane to see Kean and meet the poet. But, of course, even so great a temptation as this was resisted.

Her old sense of humour, and power of vigorously expressing it, remained. When about to move to Earl's Terrace, Kensington, she wrote to her constant friend, Mrs. Phillips:—

"Such a horror I have of packing my trunks and furniture—of seeing new faces and hearing new voices with *old* observations—that I never leave one lodging for another but

* Madame de Staël's second son, Albert.

I wish myself in gaol for debt without the benefit of an Insolvent Act!"

And when settled in the boarding-house she adds:—

"All the old widows and old maids of the house are stretched upon beds or sofas with nervous headaches or slow fevers brought on by loss of appetite, violent thirst, broken sleep, and other dog-day complaints, while I, the only young and strong person among them, am called on to divert their blue-devils from bringing them to an untimely end. I love to be of importance, and so the present society is flattering to my vanity. Not so the sonnet which was lately sent me . . . at sixteen it had been applicable, but at sixty-five a *dirge* would be more suitable."

The enforced regularity of a boarding-house was very irksome to her. She soon wished to be again where she could "dine at the hour of hunger, and cut a piece of crust off my own loaf." Yet her next, and last, removal, in 1819, was to a similar though superior residence — Kensington House, where she met several old friends, the Cosways amongst them.

"They had long been among her most select friends," says Boaden, "and in society were of infinite value from their genius and the high honours which had been paid them by the late sovereigns of France. They were an inexhaustible store of authentic information" [on French affairs] "and of that sort which everybody coveted. They were both *mystics*, and could say as much of 'the unintelligible world' as of this, which is intelligible even to disgust. We remember the rapid sketch which our friend

one day drew of the statesman Talleyrand. As a politician he was lavish in his admiration of that unparalleled sagacity which carried him safe through the dizzy whirl of endless revolutions, and placed absolutely in *his* hands the destinies of so many sovereigns. Cosway's solution of this miracle was *ex pede Herculem.* And the secret, he said, was known to him by an inward sense which revealed the prince completely to the painter, however concealed from the unilluminated." *

At Kensington House, at the end of 1820, Mrs. Inchbald received a farewell visit from Kemble—a last farewell, as both of them anticipated. "When I left you before, dearest," he said, "it was to visit Spain, and you managed for me in my absence.† Now I think I shall make out my tour to Italy, and end, perhaps, like an old Roman." Three years after this parting he died.

While living in Kensington House Mrs. Inchbald told Mrs. Opie that she rejoiced in her residence.

"We are even in these short and dark days ‡ as brilliant on the high-road and in open air as during the long and bright days of summer and autumn. I think I never saw a more gaudy yet numerous and sober procession (processions, I should say, for they lasted from morning until night) than passed the house yesterday. I think myself particularly

* The Cosways left Kensington House for a residence of their own in the Edgware Road, and in 1821 he died.

† With regard to his share in the Covent Garden Patent. Mrs. Kemble's letters to Mrs. Inchbald during her husband's absence are very clever and interesting.

‡ December, 1820.

fortunate in the place of my abode, on this account. The present world is such a fine subject to excite intense reflection."

She also speaks of their old friend :—

"Mr. Kemble called on me during the short time he was in England. He looked remarkably well in the face, but, as he walked through the courtyard to step into his carriage, I was astonished to perceive him bend down his person like a man of eighty. How, I wonder, does she support her banishment from England? He has sense and taste to find 'Books in the running brook, and good in everything.'"

And then she cannot resist a hit at the unfortunate second marriage of another of their old admirers :—"Poor Godwin is a terrific example for all conjugal biography; but he has marked the path which may be avoided, and so is himself a sacrifice for the good of others."

Though the study of humanity had not lost its charm, that of literature, except on one all-absorbing topic, was gradually abandoned.

"Your books are lying on the table of our drawing-room most days," she continues, "and I hear great praise of them. And yet I do not feel the slightest curiosity to open one of them. The reason is, there are also a hundred of Sir Walter's in the same place, and as it is impossible to read *all*, I have no wish to read any. . . . Besides, I have so many reflections concerning a future world, as well as concerning the present, and there are on that awful subject so many books still unread, that I think every moment lost

which impedes my gaining information from holy and learned authors." *

Her time for any study was indeed growing short. Seven months later she complained of cold, sore throat, and much pain. On the 29th of July her diary says: "Went down to dinner, very ill of cold and fever, could not eat, and retired to bed." On the 1st of August, 1821, she expired.

She was buried in Kensington Churchyard; her grave is next to the monument erected by Canning in memory of his beloved son. Her funeral, by her own express desire, was attended only by relations and intimate friends. Her will was very characteristic. She left a small annuity to Robert Inchbald, the needy spendthrift who of all her husband's family had most insulted and annoyed her; she divided the bulk of her property fairly among her nearest relations; so far as her means allowed, she remembered all who had been kind and obliging to her, including a laundress and a hairdresser; and she left fifty pounds each to the Theatrical Fund of Covent Garden Theatre and to the Catholic Society for the Relief of the Aged Poor.

* "Memorials of Amelia Opie," by C. L. Brightwell. Pages 180, 181.

In literature, as in life, it is not always the most famous or distinguished persons who are the most interesting. Elizabeth Inchbald cannot claim high rank in the former class, but her character, her letters, and her "Simple Story" leave her with few rivals in the latter.

AMELIA OPIE.

NORWICH, quaint and picturesque in itself, and interesting from many historical associations, has also been among the best praised and best abused of English towns with regard to its literary circles.

Between the declaration of Basil Montagu that Sir James Mackintosh and he "always found Norwich a haven of rest" when they visited it on circuit, because of the intellectual society with which it abounded, and Harriet Martineau's denunciation of it as "a rival to Lichfield itself, in the time of the Sewards, for literary pretension and the vulgarity of pedantry," lies a wide margin for difference of opinion. Truth, no doubt, as usual, will be found within the two extremes.

There may have been a tendency amongst the Norwich *illuminati* of the close of the last and beginning of the present century to form themselves into a mutual admiration society; but it cannot fairly be denied that they had amongst

them very much justly to admire. The family of Taylor alone would have saved any town from the charge of "pretension" to culture. Even Miss Martineau qualifies her sweeping censure with respect to Mrs. John Taylor and Mrs. Opie, though against William Taylor no words that she can say are fierce enough; and Dr. Alderson, Mrs. Opie's father, she calls "solemn and sententious and eccentric in manner, but not an able man in any way."* Other pens have described him as clever enough, at all events, to be a very fascinating, popular, and successful physician; and he was gratefully remembered, thirty years after his death, by poor patients to whom he had freely given time and care.

Dr. Alderson married Amelia Briggs, a descendant of an old Norfolk family,† but born in Bengal, and sent to England while yet a child, on the death of her parents, in the charge of an Indian nurse. Mrs. Alderson was beautiful and intelligent. She brought up her only child, Amelia, born in 1769, with great care; and Mrs. Opie in her fragment of autobiography traces her lifelong

* "Harriet Martineau's Autobiography." Smith & Elder, 1877. Vol. i. p. 300.

† Mrs. Opie notes with satisfaction that "before the reign of Edward I.," her maternal ancestors "assumed the surname of De Ponte or Pontibus, *i.e.* 'at Brigge' or 'Brigges.'"

interest in the cause of emancipation, and her strong sympathy for the insane, to her mother's firm and sensible mode of combating two great imaginative terrors of her childhood. These were a negro named Aboar, and a mad woman who called herself Old Happiness; Amelia was persuaded to make friends with them, and to do them kindnesses, and before long it became her greatest pleasure to visit the neighbouring lunatic asylum with flowers and gifts, to add to which she saved her small stock of pocket-money. The poor lunatics soon began to watch for her visits, and called her "the little girl from St. George's," the parish in which Dr. Alderson lived. She had to throw her offerings over the iron gates, and never could quite overcome her horror at the clanking of the chains of the unfortunate creatures who crept up to fetch them on the other side.

The wise mother, unfortunately, had always been delicate, and on the 31st December, 1784, she died, leaving Amelia, then fifteen years old, to take the head of her father's house.

The love and sympathy between father and daughter were intense. Dr. Alderson made Amelia his constant companion, and introduced her to all his friends, who formed a very gay and varied circle. Her own favourite amongst them—and it

says much for the young girl's good taste and judgment—was Mrs. John Taylor, of whom we find this description in a letter from Basil Montagu :—

"A most intelligent and excellent woman, mild and unassuming, quiet and meek, sitting amidst her large family busy with her needle and domestic occupations, but always assisting by her great knowledge the advancement of kind and dignified sentiment and conduct. Manly wisdom and feminine gentleness were in her united with such attractive manners that she was universally loved and respected. In 'high thoughts and gentle deeds' she greatly resembled the admirable Lucy Hutchinson, and in troubled times would have been equally distinguished for firmness in what she thought right." *

Mrs. Taylor was not too much engrossed by her own handsome and intellectual family to bestow sympathy and affection on her friend's motherless daughter; and Amelia's bright receptive mind was stimulated and kindled to enthusiasm in many directions by the remarkable persons with whom she associated during the impressionable period of youth.

For her future avocation as a story-writer, too, she was already beginning to lay up stores of material by observing life under more aspects than are generally open to a girl's notice. Besides her friends at the asylum, many of whose melancholy

* "Life of Sir James Mackintosh." Edited by his son. Moxon, 1835. Vol. i. p. 165.

histories she learned and narrated, she had seen Hannah Snelling, the female soldier who followed her lover to the wars, and visited Anna Maria Real, a young woman whose lover had gone to sea and who followed him to Russia disguised as a sailor, and worked out her passage undetected. Finding on her arrival that her lover was dead, she remained in the service for some years, but had landed at Lynn when Miss Alderson went to see her, and was working as a tailor—a trade she had learned on board ship—and still attired as a man. "Her manner was not pleasant, and as I watched her almost terrible eyes I fancied they indicated a deranged mind," writes Amelia. Some incidents of the "female sailor's" history must have been suppressed in her first account of herself, for subsequently "a collection of wild beasts came to town, the showman of which turned out to be Maria Real's husband, and with him she left Norwich."

Amelia's studies of human nature were also carried on in the Assize Courts, where she experienced a fearful joy in hearing counsel plead and judges speak, and watching the demeanour of the prisoners, though she carefully avoided any trial which might entail the penalty of death. On one happy occasion she found herself seated on

the bench, and the judge, Sir Henry Gould, entered into conversation with her.

"Never, I think, had my vanity been so gratified; and when, on my being forced to leave the court by the arrival of my dinner-hour, he said he hoped I was sufficiently pleased to come again, I went home much raised in my own estimation."

They must have formed a curious and interesting contrast—the handsome and venerable judge, eighty years old, and his young friend of sixteen, who is thus described by her biographer :—

"Her countenance was animated, bright and beaming; her eyes soft and expressive, yet full of ardour; her hair was abundant and beautiful, of auburn hue, and waving in long tresses. Her figure was well formed, her carriage fine, her hands, arms, and feet well shaped—and all around and about her was the spirit of youth and joy and love."*

The dramatic instinct which prompted Miss Alderson's interest in Assize Courts, in displays of oratory, and in all occasions which induced a betrayal or even an assumption of feeling, was very early developed. "Your uncle the barrister," †

* "Memorials of the Life of Amelia Opie." By Cecilia Lucy Brightwell. 1854. Page 35.

† He was originally a Dissenting minister, but left that profession for the law, was married twice, in each case to a woman of fortune, and was called to the bar. In the plenitude of his prosperity, and high in office, he was rather inclined to draw a veil over his early and humbler days. On one occasion when examining a witness, who either could not or would not recollect circumstances important to the case, he said sharply, "Why, friend, you do not seem to remember anything!" "Oh yes, I do!" was the disconcerting

Capel Lofft wrote to her, "was saying yesterday how struck he was, even in your childhood, with your power of dramatic diction and recitation, and that he had never thought it equalled by any one." Of course, having this strong bias, and some power of expression, she soon began to write plays, in one of which she performed the part of the heroine to an audience of private friends; others, it would appear, she hoped to bring before the public—an ambition stimulated no doubt by her warm friendship with Mrs. Siddons and others of the Kemble family.*

Dr. Alderson, like nearly all his contemporary notabilities in "that city of sedition, Norwich" was a Liberal, and at that time to be a Liberal meant to be a strong sympathizer with the revolutionary spirit stirring throughout Europe—which had then very real tyrannies to combat and wrongs to redress, and so many of whose votaries, disenchanted by the fading of the rosy Utopian visions of their youth, became, like Southey and Wordsworth, respectable Conservatives in middle

reply. "I very well remember your being a Presbyterian parson!" —*See* Beloe's "Sexagenarian," vol. i. pp. 155, 156.

* Miss Alderson refers in one of her letters to a farce which had apparently been returned to her for alteration after the usual weary waiting in a manager's desk: "I have been capering about the room for joy at having got my farce back. Now, idleness, adieu, when Dicky and I have held sweet converse together!"

age. This reaction, however, had not set in when Miss Alderson visited London in 1794, imbued with her father's admiration for the philosophic Republicans, yet with her own bright eyes open to all the humour of their inconsistencies and assumptions.

Such of her animated letters home as have been preserved make one regret the many others describing the trials of Horne Tooke, Holcroft, etc., which her father thought it prudent to destroy as soon as read. To Mrs. Taylor she thus relates a visit to Godwin at Somers Town, going from Southgate by way of Islington :—

"A most delightful ride through some of the richest country I ever beheld. We found the philosopher with his hair *bien poudré*, and in a pair of new, sharp-toed, red morocco slippers, not to mention his green coat and crimson under-waistcoat. He received me very kindly, but wondered I should think of being out of London. Could I be either amused or *instructed* at Southgate? I told him that I had not yet outlived my affections, and that they bound me to the family there. But was I to acknowledge any other dominion than that of reason? 'But are you sure that my affections in this case are not the *result* of reason?' He shrugged disbelief, and told me I was more of the *woman* than when he saw me last."

How delightful it would have been to hear the gay handsome girl posing the intellectual autocrat on the connection between reason and the affections! No doubt Godwin was willing to renew the discussion whenever she pleased, for among

his many flirtations he embarked on a very decided one with Amelia Alderson. She writes in another letter to the same correspondent :—

"Godwin drank tea and supped here last night. It would have entertained you highly to see him bid me farewell. He wished to salute me, but his courage failed him. 'Will you give me nothing to keep for your sake, and console me during your absence?' murmured the philosopher: 'not even your slipper? I had it in my possession once, and need not have returned it.' This was true; my shoe had come off, and he had put it in his pocket. You have no idea how gallant he is become! Mrs. Inchbald says the report of the world is that Mr. Holcroft is in love with her, *she* with Mr. Godwin, Mr. Godwin with *me*, and I with Mr. Holcroft. A pretty story, indeed! This report Godwin brings to me, and he says Mrs. Inchbald always tells him that when she praises him, *I* praise Holcroft. This is not fair of Mrs. Inchbald. She appears jealous of Godwin's attention to me, so she makes him believe I prefer Holcroft to him. She often says to me, 'Now you are come Mr. Godwin does not come near me.' Is not this *womanish?*"

Mrs. Shelley believed that her father's feeling for Amelia Alderson was merely the warm and admiring regard he entertained for Mrs. Inchbald. Mr. Kegan Paul thinks that he "seriously thought of asking her to be his wife, but whether the lady or her father declined the alliance, or whether no offer was actually made, it is plain that the feeling between the two was at no time warmer than a sincere friendship"—extended, he adds, to Mary Wollstonecraft. Some of Miss Alderson's

letters to her are still preserved, and in one of them she says that "whatever she had seen before for the first time had always disappointed her, except Mrs. Imlay * and the Cumberland Lakes!"†

From Somers Town Miss Alderson drove to Marlborough Street, and found the Tragic Muse—

"as handsome and charming as ever, engaged in nursing her little baby. . . . There, too, I saw Charles Kemble, and thought him so like Kemble, Mrs. Twiss, and Mrs. Siddons that it was some time before I could recollect myself enough to know whether he was a man or a woman. The baby is all a baby can be, but Mrs. Siddons laughs and says it is a wit and a beauty already in her eyes."

Long afterwards she said that this visit to London in 1794 was almost the most interesting period of her long life, because of the opportunity it gave her of attending the State trials:—

"Not only hearing the first pleaders at the bar, but beholding the first magnates of the land, and knowing in my secret heart that my own prospects for life might probably be darkened by the result. To such a height had party spirit reached on both sides in my native city and elsewhere that even innocent men were accused of treasonable intentions and practices who *talked* when excited by contradiction the fearful things they would never have thought of acting; and I had reason to believe that if the 'felons' about to be tried should not be acquitted, certain friends of mine would have emigrated to America, and my beloved father would have been induced to accompany them."

* The name by which Mary Wollstonecraft was then known.

† "William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries." H. S. King, 1876. Vol. i. p. 158.

The Rev. W. Beloe, prebendary of St. Paul's, rector of All Hallows, and assistant-librarian at the British Museum (whose often highly scandalous gossip called forth such a bitter protest from Dr. Parr), dealt very tenderly, for him, with Miss Alderson, but calls her "a perfect picture of a *précieuse*," while telling a story which shows her in quite a different light. After speaking of her early revolutionary sympathies, he adds—

"On one occasion, indeed, her enthusiasm got the better both of her prudence and the natural delicacy of her sex. She attended the trial of her admired patriot, Horne Tooke, for high treason. When the verdict of 'Not Guilty' was pronounced she scrambled over seats and benches, and, hastening to where he stood, kissed him in the public court!"*

It seems a pity to spoil a good story, but it is only fair to Mrs. Opie to add that in a letter written to Constable in 1817, she says—

"I know not whether the *Edinburgh Review* will think that very amusing work, the "Sexagenarian," by the late Mr. Beloe, worthy of its notice, nor, if it should do so, am I quite sure that the editor may think it advisable to redress an individual grievance at the representation of a complaint. Nor am I certain that it is ever wise to notice and deny a calumnious report, because, as Lord Bacon somewhere says, a calumny is like a spark; if you attempt to tread it out it flies up in your face. Still, I wish to state, through your means, to Mr. Jeffrey, of whose good opinion, I am, I trust, meritoriously ambitious, that Mr. Beloe in this posthumous

* "The Sexagenarian." Rivington, 1818. Second edition, vol. i. p. 413.

publication has asserted of me a positive falsehood. I never saw Mr. Horne Tooke till I saw him on his trial, and the charge of my having scrambled over chairs and tables to get up to him on his acquittal, and then kissed him in public court, is as false as it is malignant. Such conduct not even my youth could have excused, and never at any period of my life could I, I trust, have been guilty of such an outrage on the delicacy of my sex, and such a violation of my respectability as a gentlewoman."

In spite of her natural indignation, she, however, cannot resist telling Constable of a pretty speech Horne Tooke made her on this occasion. After the acquittal, Mr. Boddington introduced his wife and Mrs. Opie (then Miss Alderson) to the hero of the hour, and Horne Tooke said to the latter, "I think, ma'am, I have seen you every day during my trial." "Yes, sir." "Then grant me one favour; when I am tried for my life again, which I dare say I shall be six months hence, promise me to attend my trial again every day." *

There were at this time seven thousand and forty-one *émigrés* in London and its suburbs, and the Norwich belle made some friends and admirers amongst them. The Duc d'Aiguillon wrote to her:—

"Mais vous! Que désirer pour votre bonheur? La Nature n'a-t-elle pas pourvu à tout, en vous donnant les qualités du cœur, celles de l'esprit, des graces, des talents?

* "Archibald Constable and his Literary Correspondents," vol. ii. p. 277.

Je me bornerai donc à souhaiter que vous soyez toujours aussi heureuse que vous méritez de l'être, et c'est tout dire."

Naturally so beautiful and brilliant a woman, with so large and varied a circle of acquaintances, is reported to have had hosts of admirers, some of whom aspired to become more than admirers. She herself refers laughingly to a love-affair at sixteen; and there would seem from a passage in a letter to Mrs. Taylor to have been a later and stronger attachment, but this is not further alluded to. In 1797, Miss Alderson again visited London, and, at an evening party given by some intimate friends, first met John Opie:—

"Some of those present were rather eagerly expecting her arrival, but the evening was wearing away, and still she did not appear. At length the door was flung open, and she entered, bright and smiling, dressed in blue, her neck and arms bare, on her head a small bonnet placed coquettishly on one side and surmounted by three white feathers. Her hair hung in rich waving tresses over her shoulders; her face kindled with pleasure at sight of her old friends; her whole appearance was animated and glowing. . . . Opie was charmed at first sight."

The immediate fascination was probably not mutual, for Opie, while looking, according to Allan Cunningham, like an "inspired peasant," had still the rugged and unpolished peasant manner, and it took a certain amount of acquaintance to penetrate to the high qualities underlying it. He was the son of a master-carpenter in St.

Agnes, near Truro. His mother belonged to the good old Cornish family of Tonkin, one of whose members wrote a history of his native county. At ten years old Opie had mastered many of Euclid's problems, and at twelve he opened an evening school for arithmetic and writing (in which he excelled), some of his pupils being twice his age.

About this time he taught himself to draw, by copying pictures which he saw in the houses of his father's employers, or displayed in shop windows. His father wished John to follow his own trade, and discouraged his artistic propensities, but the boy fortunately came under the notice of Dr. Wolcot ("Peter Pindar"), who then lived at Truro, and with his assistance and encouragement Opie's progress became so rapid that before he was sixteen he began to support himself as an itinerant portrait-painter, finding patrons in the neighbourhood, and often adding the cats and dogs of the establishment to the family groups.

It was not long before Dr. Wolcot sent Opie to London, where, after varying fortunes, first being called "the wonder of the day" and marvelled at as a heaven-born peasant painter, and then treated for a long time with unmerited and disheartening neglect, he had, when he met Amelia Alderson, attained a high position.

In the meantime he had made a most unfortunate marriage, and been divorced from his wife, and these domestic troubles may have added to the ruggedness and harsh reserve of manner found repellent by new acquaintances. "He greatly resembled his paintings," wrote Mrs. Opie in after years, "and while the trivial defects both of him and them were obvious to the many, the unusual excellences of both could be completely known and justly valued only by the few." *

Whatever Miss Alderson's first impressions of her new admirer may have been, many weeks had not elapsed before she wrote to Mrs. Taylor:—

"If my head be not turned by the large draughts which my vanity is daily quaffing, I shall return to Norwich much happier than I left it. Mr. Opie has (but *mum*) been my declared lover almost ever since I came. I was ingenuous with him upon principle, and I told him my situation and the state of my heart. He said he should still persist, and would risk all consequences to his own peace, and so he did and does, and I have not resolution to forbid his visits. Is not this abominable? Nay, more—were I not certain my father would disapprove such or, indeed, *any* connection for me, there are moments when, ambitious of being a wife and mother, and of securing to myself a companion for life, capable of entering into all my pursuits and of amusing me by his, I could almost resolve to break all fetters and relinquish the wide and often aristocratic circle in which I now move, to become the wife of a man whose genius has

* Introduction to Opie's "Lectures on Painting." Longmans, 1809. Page 3.

raised him from obscurity into fame and comparative affluence. But my mind is on the pinnacle of its health when I thus feel, and on a pinnacle one can't remain long."

She says also that the chief inducement Mr. Opie offered to her was that he would "joyfully consent" to Dr. Alderson's living with them. "What a temptation to me, who am every moment sensible that the claims of my father will always be with me superior to any charms that a lover can hold out!" Yet even this consideration does not quite avail. "Often do I rationally and soberly state to Opie the reasons that might urge me to marry him—in time—and the reasons why I could never be happy with him, nor he with me. But it always ends in his persisting in his suit."

All comes, we are assured, to those who wait—and persevere. Opie persevered, and did not have to wait very long. How Dr. Alderson's objections—if indeed he did object so strongly as his daughter anticipated—were overcome we are not informed, but it was not by any arrangement for a joint household. When Amelia Alderson married the artist at Marylebone Church, in May, 1798, the bride and bridegroom remained in town, and Dr. Alderson returned to Norwich.

In Mrs. Opie's introduction to her husband's "Lectures on Painting," she describes their limited means and frugal life when first married, and

their enjoyment of "the cheap pleasures of existence—reading, conversation, an evening walk." Opie preferred spending his leisure hours at home, studying prints, sketching designs for pictures, and playing on the flute, to any society—provided his one beloved companion was with him. Her love of society, so natural to one in every way qualified to shine in it, was the only point on which they differed. After returning from a short visit to her father at Norwich, Mrs. Opie writes to Mrs. John Taylor: "I have led a most happy and delightful life since my return, and in the whole two months have not been out more than four times; so spouse and I had no squabbles about visiting, and that is the only thing we ever quarrel about. If I would stay at home for ever I believe he would be merry from morning to night, and be a lover more than a husband."

But now and then they went to the theatre or the opera, in which both took great delight, Opie's ear being so accurate that he could play on the flute, or whistle, on their return home, all the airs which had pleased him on first hearing them. Mrs. Opie's talent for music had been carefully cultivated in Norwich, and Mrs. Taylor, in a paper on her contributed to the *Cabinet*, to accompany a portrait, observes—

"She was unrivalled in that kind of singing in which she more particularly delighted. Those only who have heard her can conceive the effect she produced in the performance of her own ballads. Of these *The Poor Hindoo* was one of her chief favourites, and the expression of plaintive misery and affectionate supplication which she threw into it we may safely say has very seldom been equalled. She may fairly be said to have created a style of singing of her own, which, though polished and improved by art and cultivation, was founded in that power which she so pre-eminently possesses of awakening tender sympathies and pathetic feelings."

Mr. S. C. Hall, who knew Mrs. Opie in later years, says—

"She was perfect as a musician, according to the simple perfecting of those days, and sang with power and sweetness the music then in vogue—*Sally in our Alley*, *Savourneen Deelish*, and the soprano songs from *Love in a Village*, *The Beggars' Opera*, and *Artaxerxes*." *

She also delighted in dancing, in connection with which she tells a curious story. Once when revisiting Norwich with her husband, they accompanied a friend to see the Dutch Church :—

"The two gentlemen were engaged together; I, finding myself somewhat cold, began to hop and dance on the spot where I stood. Suddenly my eyes fell on the pavement below, and I started at beholding the well-known name 'Christian' graved on the slab. I stopped in dismay, shocked to find that I had actually been dancing upon the grave of my old dancing-master!"

To return to her early married life :—

* "Book of Memories." Virtue and Co., 1871. Page 168.

"To procure indulgences for a wife whom he loved," she writes, "Mr. Opie found it necessary to make himself popular in that productive and difficult branch of the art, female portraiture. He therefore turned his attention to points he had been in the habit of neglecting, and his pictures soon acquired a grace and softness to which they had of late years been strangers."

A brother artist noticing the change at one of the exhibitions, said: "We never saw anything like this in you before, Opie—it must be owing to your wife." He repeated the compliment to her with great pleasure, adding that he was very willing the improvement should be attributed to her.

Mrs. Opie was equally ready to acknowledge her indebtedness to her husband's advice and sympathy. In those days there was a marked prejudice against women writers, and in the class from which Opie sprang the feeling might have been expected to be particularly strong. But he did not share it:—

"He knew that my most favourite amusement was writing, and he always encouraged my ambition to become an acknowledged author. Our only quarrel on the subject was not that I wrote so much, but that I did not write more and better. And to the last hour of my existence I shall deplore those habits of indolence which made me neglect to write while it was in my power to profit by his criticisms and advice, and when, by employing myself more regularly in that manner, I should have been sure to receive the proudest and dearest reward of woman—the approbation of a husband at once the object of her respect and of her love."

Thus the seemingly incongruous marriage, which some friends ridiculed or blamed, and at which all wondered, between the rugged, uncultivated (though far from unintellectual) artist, and the radiant, fastidious, coquettish beauty, proved a thoroughly happy one. She frankly owns that she thought some of Opie's economies passed the limits of necessity, but she endured them cheerfully, knowing the uncompromising independence and uprightness from which they arose. She was proud of his conversational powers,* and denies that he ever uttered the bearish and bitter personalities attributed to him on his first entrance to London society. He assured her that they were invented for him by a friend, who thought the greatest service he could do to Opie was by any means to heighten his notoriety!

A trait in Opie's character, which his wife especially valued, was his strong family affection, and his entire freedom from all disingenuousness or false shame as to his parents' position. His mother he described as "the most perfect of human beings—the most mild, most just, and

* Horne Tooke said, "Opie crowds more wisdom into a few words than almost any man I ever knew. He *speaks in axioms*." (Which perhaps sounds a little fatiguing to ordinary minds?) And Mrs. Siddons observed, "When I am with him I am always sure to hear something which I cannot forget, or at least which ought never to be forgotten."

most disinterested of women;" and Mrs. Opie adds, "I believe scarcely any one who knew her would have thought this description exaggerated." She lived to be ninety-two, in the full possession of all her faculties.

There are many lively home-pictures in Mrs. Opie's letters to Mrs. Taylor:—

"I am very much afraid my spouse will not live long," she writes in 1800. "He has got a fit of tidyness on him, and employed himself for two evenings in putting his painting-room to rights. This confirms what I said to him the other day, that almost every man was *beau* or sloven at some time of his life. Charles Fox once wore pink heels; now he has an unpowdered crop. I expect that as my husband has been a sloven hitherto, he will be a *beau* in future. He is so pleased with his handy-work, and capers about, and says, 'Look there! How neat—and how prettily I have disposed the things! Did you ever see the like?' Certainly I never did where *he* was before!"

In 1801, Mrs. Opie's first acknowledged novel, "Father and Daughter," dedicated to Dr. Alderson, appeared.* It was praised by the *Edinburgh Review*, became very popular, and Paer based an opera, "*Agnese*," upon it. Mrs. Opie's terror and anxiety while the book was in the press were great. She felt doubly desirous that it should succeed, as Mr. Opie was, at the end of that year and the beginning of the next, "almost without

* She had published anonymously a story called "The Dangers of Coquetry," before her marriage.

employment." He had no commissions, although his exhibited paintings had been greatly praised, and was consequently in a state of despondency which it needed all his wife's bright hopefulness to dispel or even alleviate. His extreme self-depreciation * added to this depression, but he did not allow it for a moment to lessen his industry, which was always remarkable. Northcote said of him:—"Many artists paint to live, but Opie lives to paint;" and "others get forward by steps, but this man by strides." "Painting is a pleasure and a profession to many," says Mrs. Opie, "but to him it was a passion." In spite of his disappointment, "he continued to paint regularly as usual, and no doubt increased by that means his ability to do justice to the torrent of business which soon after set in towards him, and never ceased to flow till the day of his death."

One of the first and pleasantest results of this renewed prosperity was a visit to Paris, which afforded Opie the long anticipated delight of visiting the Louvre; on the same day, as it happened, as Charles James Fox and his wife,

* "During the nine years that I was his wife," Mrs. Opie writes, "I never saw him satisfied with any one of his productions; and often, very often, have I seen him throw himself in an agony of despondence on the sofa in my sitting-room, exclaiming, 'I never, never shall be a painter as long as I live!'"

with whom they made the tour of the galleries, Mrs. Opie proudly observing the great statesman's deference to her husband on artistic questions.

To her the chief event of the holiday was the opportunity it afforded of seeing the First Consul. This was at a review on the Place de Carousel, for which a French acquaintance had secured for the Opies a window on the ground floor of the Tuileries:—

"Just before the review began we saw several officers in gorgeous uniforms ascend the stairs, one of whom, whose helmet seemed entirely of gold, was Eugène de Beauharnais. A few minutes afterwards there was a rush of officers down the stairs, and amongst them I saw a short pale man with his hat in his hand, who resembled Lord Erskine in profile. But, though my friend whispered, '*C'est lui*,' I did not comprehend that I beheld Buonaparte, till I saw him stand alone at the gate. In another moment he was on his horse, while I, trembling with emotion, gazed on him intently, endeavouring to commit each expressive sharply-chiselled feature to memory, contrasting also with admiration his small simple hat, adorned with nothing but a little tricoloured cockade, and his blue coat, guiltless of gold embroidery, with the splendid adornments of the officers who followed him. . . . At length the review ended—too soon for me. The First Consul sprang from his horse. We threw open our door again, and, as he slowly reascended the stairs, we saw him very near us and in full face, while his bright, restless, expressive and, as we fancied, dark blue eyes beaming from under long black eyelashes, glanced over us with a scrutinizing but complacent look." *

* From a paper contributed by Mrs. Opie to *Tait's Magazine*, vol. iv., 1831.

During this visit to Paris Mrs. Opie was in such a state of uncontrollable enthusiasm, all the visions of human perfectibility which the friends of her childhood had associated with the French Revolution rushing on her brain, that while sitting in the boulevards she sang, in her clear, brilliant soprano, "Fall, tyrants, fall!"* With what a mixture of amusement and horror must the gentle Quakeress of later years have looked back on this ebullition!

Another Napoleonic reminiscence was a visit, under the auspices of the beautiful Maria Cosway (artist and artist's wife), to the house of Madame Buonaparte, *mère*. The hostess was, unfortunately, too ill to receive the Opies, and they only saw "the top of Madame Murat's cap," as she alighted from her carriage to visit her mother. But the honours of the house were done very efficiently by "a blooming ecclesiastic," youthful-looking and extremely *bien soignée*, adorned with powdered hair, purple stockings, gold crucifix, and shoe-buckles, his complexion fresh and rosy, his manners gracious.

"He seemed a merry as well as a courteous man. Once he took Maria Cosway aside, and showed her a letter just received, which to judge

* This episode is *not* recorded in *Tait's Magazine*, but was related by a friend who witnessed it.

from his hearty laugh and her answering smiles gave them excessive pleasure." This was an intimation from Rome that he might soon be called upon "to exchange his purple stockings for scarlet ones, and his title of Archbishop of Lyons for that of Cardinal Fesch."

Mrs. Opie was fortunate in seeing three of her heroes during this visit to Paris, men as strongly contrasted in character as in destiny—Fox and Napoleon, already mentioned, and Kosciusko, whom she met at a party given by an English lady. She was at first sight disappointed by not finding "Warsaw's last champion" externally the *véritable héros du roman* she had pictured him.

"He was not much above the middle height, had high cheek-bones, and features not of a distinguished cast. His eyes were fine and expressive, and he had a high healthy colour. His forehead was covered by a curled auburn wig, much to my vexation, as I should have liked to see its honourable scar. But his appearance was pleasing, his countenance intellectual, his carriage dignified. He spoke English as well as we did."

Kosciusko, with great simplicity, asked Mrs. Opie to write some verses on him, which she did for his next birthday.

In the following year, while Mrs. Opie was paying her annual visit to her father, Opie writes,

as usual, urging her speedy return, telling her that he cannot do without her, as she is "more than ever a part of himself," and adding that he is sending her—

"A letter, with a volume of poems by Henry Kirke White, a visionary boy of seventeen, who with all becoming diffidence presumes to lay his youthful effusions at your feet. He was struck by the resemblance of one of his poems to one of yours, though to compare the former to the latter is like comparing O'Keefe to Shakespere. There!—I hope this will give you pleasure. The cat and parrot are both well, and the kitten beautiful and merry. Adieu, my only love."

Mrs. Opie's novel, "Adeline Mowbray," published in 1804, was called by the *Edinburgh Review* "the most pathetic, and the most natural in its pathos, of any fictitious narrative in the language." Indeed, even unfavourable critics allowed her pathos. Miss Mitford, who called her "vulgar" (to be sure, that was in a letter to Mrs. Hofland, a rival novelist, and the wife of a rival artist), owns that she has "painful pathos," and adds, "I like Mrs. Opie, but I *don't* like to feel as if I wanted to cry;"* and Miss Martineau says—

* In a later letter to Sir William Elford she gives a rather spiteful receipt for an Opie novel: "One knows the usual ingredients of her tales, just as one knows the component parts of a plum-pudding. So much common sense (for the flour), so much vulgarity (for the suet), so much love (for the sugar), so many songs (for the plums), so much wit (for the spices), so much fine binding morality (for the

"Mrs. Opie wrote slowly and amidst a strenuous excitement of her sensibilities. She liked trying the effect of her tales on hearers before they went to press. I remember my mother and sister coming home with swollen eyes and tender spirits after spending an evening with Mrs. Opie to hear 'Temper,' which she read in her most overpowering way. When they saw it in print they could hardly believe it was the same story." *

That last qualifying clause is highly characteristic.

In 1806 Opie at last admitted that his improved circumstances would justify the indulgence in some modest pleasures long denied, and looked forward to as a sort of high-water mark of prosperity. His wife was to improve and enlarge her apartments and receive her friends in a manner "more befitting our appreciation of their society," and he was to have the luxury of riding on horseback. But these bright visions were destined to remain visions only.

In the summer of the same year the Opies visited Southill, the seat of Mr. and Lady Elizabeth Whitbread; Wilkie, and Lady Roslyn and her children, being also of the party. On

eggs), and so much mere mawkishness and insipidity (for the milk and water wherewith the said pudding is mixed up). Yet she is a very clever woman and a good-natured woman, and although my exceeding fastidiousness with respect to style and elegance and gracefulness in writing deprives me of any pleasure in her works, there are a great many very good judges who admire her writings greatly."—"Life and Letters of Mary Russell Mitford." Bentley, 1870. Vol. ii. p. 148.

* "Harriet Martineau's Autobiography," vol. i. p. 430.

one of their excursions Mrs. Opie and Lady Roslyn went into a country house and asked the caretaker, who was busy cooking her dinner, for a glass of milk. The old woman hurried off to get it, putting down her ladle, which Lady Roslyn took up, saying it would be a pity that she should suffer for her good nature; and Mrs. Opie adds that among the interesting and unexpected sights of the morning, that of the fashionable beauty, "Harriet, Countess of Roslyn, basting a leg of mutton, was not the least." This is like a bit from one of her own "Tales of Real Life."

At Southill she would have been well content to stay, but Opie soon grew restless, complaining that he had been "idle for eight days," and accordingly they returned to town, where, says his wife, "to the toils of the artist every day succeeded those of the writer every evening. From September, 1806, to February, 1807, he allowed his mind no rest, and scarcely indulged in a walk or the society of his friends."

The work which so engrossed him was his "Lectures on Painting," delivered at the Royal Academy,* after the first of which, says Cunning-

* "I am tired, tired of writing," he told Prince Hoare, when the lectures were completed. "I mean to be a gentleman in the spring months, keep a horse, and ride out every morning."

ham, in his "Lives of British Artists," "he was complimented by his brethren, escorted home by Sir William Beechey, and appeared to his wife in a flush of joy." But the triumph was dearly purchased. The last lecture was given on the 9th of March; he was almost immediately taken ill, and in spite of the efforts of the best physicians of the day, and the incessant care of his wife and sister, he died on the 9th of April.

"The most soothing consciousness I have to look back upon," writes Mrs. Opie, "is the certainty that my husband's last perceptions in this world were of a pleasurable nature. By the kindness of his friend and former pupil, Mr. Thompson, R.A., he was gratified in his desire to see his picture of the Duke of Gloucester, which he was most anxious should appear in the exhibition, completed, and when it was brought to the foot of his bed he looked at it with the greatest satisfaction, and said with a smile, 'Take it away—it will do now.' This incident seemed to give the turn to the delirium which followed, for he was painting in imagination upon it until the last hour of his existence."

On the funeral of Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1792, Opie exclaimed to his sister, "Ay, girl! and I too shall be buried in St. Paul's." His prophecy came true; fifteen years later Opie was laid in the cathedral almost by his great brother artist's side.

Soon after this Mrs. Opie returned to her father's house in Norwich. Miss Mitford, in a letter to the Rev. William Harness, intimates

that there were very painful circumstances attending the breaking up of her London home, and regrets that they were "so smoothed over" in the "Memorials," adding that—

"Mrs. Opie was herself so kind and excellent a woman that she could well have afforded to have the truth told of her. . . . All her friends knew how hard it was that the furniture for which she had worked should be sold for the benefit of her coarse sister."

She must of course have meant Opie's sister, of whom Mrs. Opie always spoke and wrote with the greatest cordiality.* It should be remembered that Miss Mitford, with all her charming qualities, was an inveterate gossip. Her prejudices were intense, and she does not seem to have weighed and sifted the evidence for all the stories she repeats.

Collecting and arranging a small volume of poems, and writing the prefatory memoir to her husband's "Lectures on Painting," † occupied

* "Let me be thankful for the blessing I experienced in the presence of that sister, so dear to my husband, who by sharing with me the painful yet precious tasks of affection enabled me to keep from his bed all hired nurses—all attendants but our deeply interested selves; that was indeed a consolation."

† Of this memoir Sir James Mackintosh observes, "It is a pleasing sketch, in one or two parts very elegant; it breathes esteem, admiration, and pride. . . . One passage I object to—where she makes an excuse for not exposing his faults. The apology is unnecessary. . . . She ought either to have been absolutely silent, or, with an intrepid confidence in the character of her husband, to have stated faults which she was sure would have been

Mrs. Opie in her first years of widowhood. Kind, warm-hearted Lady Charleville was one of her correspondents, and encouraged her to go on writing:—

"Begin a good long Clarissa-like novel; you have principles and fancy to compose an interesting and elevating work, and a knowledge of the manners of the world, which Richardson wanted. Give me a character, acting and developing itself under a variety of circumstances, to interest my feelings and exert my understanding; and set her feet on English ground, and let us not have mystic notions or Asiatic refinements to perplex our intellects, too well-braced by this northern temperature to sympathize with mysteries, embroideries, or odours, or start at every creaking hinge in an old castle. Miss Owenson, whom I saw in Dublin, tells me she is writing a tale of Hindostan. Let's keep to plain English for yours."

Mrs. Opie was in London at the time of Sir Francis Burdett's forcible removal to the Tower in 1810, when committed by the Speaker for contempt of the House of Commons; party feeling ran dangerously high, and she speaks of the peculiar sensation she experienced, when returning from a party to her rooms in Prince's Street, on seeing cannon planted in Hanover Square, and soldiers watching by their guns.

During a later visit to town Mrs. Opie attended a brilliant *soirée* at the house of Madame de

'dust in the balance' placed in the scale opposite to his merits."—"Life," vol. ii. p. 27.

Staël, who had recently left the court of Bernadotte, and was eloquent in his praise; she produced a profile miniature of her favourite, which she placed in the hand of Sir Harry Englefield (a great virtuoso of the day), anxiously awaiting his verdict. "Carefully and long did he examine the painting, and then, holding it up to the light, observed, with a slow, distinct utterance, and in a rather loud voice, 'He is like a ferocious sheep!'"

"Corinne's" indignation was extreme, but Mrs. Opie says the resemblance was unmistakable.

With all the vivacity and enthusiasm of her youth, the same enthusiasm she showed on behalf of the republican Horne Tooke, Mrs. Opie joined in "Emperor-hunting," when the visit of the Allied Sovereigns in 1814 turned all the women's heads.

"Just room and time," she concludes one of her letters to her father, "to say that I have seen and *touched* the Emperor! Other ladies touched his hand, I squeezed his wrist only. I bribed the porter and got into his hotel!!! He was dressed in a scarlet uniform (ours) and wore our blue ribbon. His head is bald, his hair light, his complexion blond and beautiful, his eyes blue, his nose flattish, with a funny little button end to it, his mouth is small and his lips thin. His chest and shoulders are broad and finely formed, his manner graceful and dignified. He is the Emperor of all the Russias, and therefore he is handsome, delightful, and so forth."

At Lady Charleville's Mrs. Opie saw "a vener-

able-looking blind woman, bowed by various cares." "This," said Lady Charleville, "is Lady Sarah Napier.* Will you sing her a ballad?" Mrs. Opie replied that she could not sing anything worth hearing, but she would try. "Surely," said Lady Sarah, gently, "that was injudicious. Mrs. Opie would rather not have the attention of the company so loudly solicited." "Very true," replied Lady Charleville, "but your ladyship is always the best bred woman in the world, and I the worst, and I never see you without taking a lesson in manners." Mrs. Opie sang "The Soldier's Farewell," inspired, apparently, by her immense admiration for one of the young Napiers who accompanied his mother:—"He was wounded in every engagement abroad. I never saw a handsomer man—I could not help looking at him! . . . he has his mother's outline, enlarged into manly beauty, and such fine dark eyes."

At another party, given by Lady Cork, the guests suffered tortures from hope deferred. Blucher had been invited, but did not appear; every fresh arrival aroused expectation anew, only to be again disappointed. Lady Caroline Lamb, says Mrs. Opie, "did her possible" to

* The early love of George III., and the first wife of Sir Charles Bunbury.

keep up the flagging spirits of the invited guests, even to acting a charade ; but when this was over, and the great man had not come, she too vanished. Then arrived—

"Mrs. Wellesley Pole, bringing a beautiful Prince—Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg ; but saying she feared Blucher would not come. However, we now heard a distant, then a near hurrah, and a violent knocking at the door. The hurrahs increased and we all jumped up, exclaiming, 'There's Blucher at last!' The door opened, the servant announced 'General Blucher,' and in strutted Lady Caroline in a cocked hat and a great coat! In the meanwhile Lord Hardwick had arrived from the British Gallery, where he had been in attendance on Princess Charlotte and the Grand Duchess, and to him Lady Caroline went with clasped hands and lifted eyes, saying she was come to ask the *greatest* favour—would he give her some money? 'What for?' 'Oh, to pay the servants for that *pretty hurrah* ; they did it so beautifully!' So poor Lord Hardwick gave her a dollar, looking, I thought, rather silly at having his pocket so gracefully picked ; and Lady Caroline ran downstairs delighted."

Even in the exceptionally brilliant circles of that exciting time Mrs. Opie was a special favourite. Her successes, enjoyed with the simple gaiety of a child, are related with a child's candour to her father: she tells him how, all through a dinner at Mackintosh's (a philosophic dinner, at which she anticipated being starved with both cold and hunger, for there was no fire, and three several hours for dining had been named to different guests), J. W. Ward (afterwards Lord Dudley)

whispered witty things in her ear—"more charming and more malicious, more Puck-like than I had seen him for years." How Lady Cork gave her an exquisite trimming for a ball dress—"really handsome; a wreath of white satin flowers worked upon net." How James Smith, driving to a party at Fulham with her and a friend, sang funny songs and repeated epigrams and *bon mots* all the way there, gave them an extempore comedy in the hall while waiting for their carriage to return, and when seated in it invented a romantic biography of Sir William Dunbar, in letters, beginning, without a moment's pause, "When we last parted, my dear General, I was in the prime of life: every hope full of vigour," etc. How she meets Von Humboldt, who talks of "politics, science, literature, Greek, morals, Church government, the characters of the Emperor of Russia, King of Prussia, Blucher, and Platoff." How "old Albinia of Buckinghamshire" has made her promise to go to her "masked breakfast;" and how, at another masquerade, a ball to the Duke of Wellington, she is to appear "full-dressed, but no train, and high feathers; with a pink domino of calico, made high and long, to give me height and disguise me, thrown over all, that I may be *incog.* till I am tired, and then appear as *myself*."

At a breakfast given by Sir George Phillips in 1816, Mrs. Opie was placed next to Sir Walter Scott, who told her that he had cried over her "Father and Daughter" "more than he ever cried over such things." She asked Scott why, having so much dramatic power, he had never tried the drama? And he gave her an outline of a tragedy he had projected and even begun, during which, she says, "his whole face became elevated in its character, and even the features acquired dignity and grace from the power of genius. Never shall I—never *can* I—forget the fine expression of his lifted eye." Wordsworth also was of the party, but she does not mention having spoken with him.

Meantime, during years, very briefly summarized here, of social and intellectual pleasure, of devoted attendance on her father, of steady literary work, and of some passing thoughts of again changing her name,* an influence felt from childhood was

* Her biographer merely says that "she turned a deaf ear to such proposals." But according to Miss Mitford this was not invariably the case. "I doubt," she says in the letter previously quoted, "if it be permissible to ignore entirely the absolute engagement Mrs. Opie was under to marry Lord Herbert Stuart (I forget names, but surely it was Lord Herbert, a lame man). My good old friend Sir William Elford was invited by her to meet him at dinner; at that time all was arranged, and the time fixed for the wedding. It went off on agreement because, though each had enough to live on—he as a bachelor in lodgings, passing eight

slowly gaining a stronger and stronger hold upon her. Dr. Alderson and the Gurney family had been lifelong friends; the sisters Priscilla and Elizabeth (afterwards Mrs. Fry) were warmly attached to Amelia, and J. J. Gurney wrote from time to time warning letters, in which he bade her keep herself "unspotted from the world."

"Now what wilt thou say to me?" he continues. "Perhaps thou wilt say that thy countrified, drab-coated, Methodistical friend knows nothing of 'the world,' misinterprets the meaning of the apostle, and is frightened by the bugbear of a name as a child is by a ghost. There may be some truth in these observations of thine, and I must allow that the world is not idolatrous now as it was then . . . but I refer particularly to the fashionable world, of which I am apt to entertain two notions—first, that there is much in it of real evil; second, that there is much also in it which has a decided tendency to produce forgetfulness of God, and thus to generate evil indirectly. On the other hand, there is little in it, perhaps, which is *positively good*."

He thanks her for her last letter, which is "an instructive inmate of my pocket-book, since it bespeaks a tender conscience," and praises her "Christian charity." In another letter, after contrasting worldly pleasures and religious happiness,

months of the year in the country houses of kinsfolk and friends, and she as a poor authoress without the encumbrance of rank—they could not muster enough to keep house and preserve a certain appearance in days when broughams and pages were not, and horses and men were essential to an establishment however modest."

he adds, with a humorous candour which must have appealed very strongly to his correspondent :—

"Thou wilt observe, my dear friend, that I have underscored the words *liked, admired, and flattered.* It is because I know thou art so, and unless thou art of a very different composition to thy friend it must afford no small temptations to thee. . . . I really should like to know how thy mind was affected by Lady Buckinghamshire's day masquerade, because I am sure that if I could sing and converse in that way and procure all manner of favour and applause from innumerable lords and ladies, I should be as vain as a peacock thereupon. Now I confess that if thou art vain thy vanity does not show itself."

The same letter mentions the serious illness of the writer's brother John Gurney, who died soon afterwards, to Mrs. Opie's lasting grief. She travelled all night from London to follow him to the grave, and thenceforward regularly attended the religious services of the Quakers.* The loss of her old friends Hayley and Mrs. Inchbald, and of the lovely and gentle Priscilla Gurney, and a serious illness of Dr. Alderson's, further disinclined Mrs. Opie for general society, threw her much on the

* Miss Martineau's "Autobiography" contains some curious reminiscences of the youth of the Gurneys and Frys. She speaks of them as "a set of dashing young people, dressing in gay riding habits and scarlet boots, and riding about the country to balls and gaities of all sorts. Accomplished and charming young ladies they were, and we children used to hear some whispered gossip about the effect of their charms on heartstricken young men." Vol. i. p. 301.

companionship and sympathy of the Gurneys, and disposed her to join the sect to which so many of her dearest surviving friends belonged. After long hesitation and mental conflict, the final step was taken, and she was "received into membership" in August, 1825.

Had Mrs. Opie then known and loved Bishop Stanley and his son Arthur as she did in later years, her departure from Unitarianism might have taken another direction. Southey in one of his letters says: "I like her in spite of her Quakerism —nay, perhaps the better for it. It must always be remembered among what persons she had lived, and that religion was never presented to her in a serious form until she saw it in *drab*."

Dr. Alderson expressed his warm approval of his daughter's decision. He was dying; she would be left, as to close domestic ties, absolutely alone, and perhaps he thought her still buoyant and excitable temperament would find a safe and supporting substitute for them in the quieting discipline of the wider family of Friends. Mrs. Opie's grief for her father's death, which took place in the following October, was no less bitter because the event had been long known to both of them to be approaching. Her greatest comfort was in reflecting on their joint hope of reunion,

and on the kind acts of her father's life ;* and her letters and journals during the years immediately following her loss show how unremittingly she toiled among the poor and sick and sinful, visiting hospitals, workhouses, and gaols, carrying comfort and relief everywhere, and keeping a high ideal of religious duty before her eyes.

But it seems morbid and distressing to find the innocent, sunny-tempered, sweet-natured Amelia Opie calling herself "vile," "cold and dead," and suffering "paroxysms of regret for unfulfilled duties." It is quite refreshing to come upon such an entry as: "Made a resolution not to speak slightingly again of ——, *if I can help it.*"

Of course Mrs. Opie's friends "in the world" were astonished and dismayed at the thought that she was going out of it. Lady Cork regarded the change mainly as a question of costume :—

"*Si vous êtes heureuse je ne suis pas malheureuse,* used to be my motto to you. I must be glad that you are happy ; but I must confess I have too much *self* not to feel it a tug at my heart, the *no chance* I have of enjoying your society

* "He prescribed," she says, "for four or five hundred persons at his house every week. The forms in our large hall in the morning were so full that I could scarcely pass ; and this he did till the beginning of 1821, when, unable to go downstairs, he received the people at my earnest desire in my little drawing-room, till he said he could receive no one again. Oh, it was the most bitter trial he or I ever experienced when he was forced to give up this truly Christian duty !"

again. Will your primitive cap never dine with me, and enjoy a quiet company? Your parliament friend does not wear a broad-brimmed hat, so pray, pray, *pray* do not put on the bonnet! Come to me and be my love in a dove-coloured garb and a simple head-dress. . . . I could fill a paper with fun, but the cold water of your last makes me end my letter."

And Lady Charleville wrote:—

"Pour avoir le plaisir de te tutoyer, je t'écris, ma chère, en François, où l'on tutoyé naturellement celles que l'on aime. . . . Et je te jure que, quand tu te ferois Bramine cela me seroit égale, tant que tu conserverais pour moi la même bonté que jadis! . . . Viens nous voir—j'en serai trop enchantée. Ton cœur n'est point changé, et je suis sûre que ta costume ne te rendra pas moins intéressante pour tes amis."

She did go to see them—at least, she went to London, and took part in such decorous joys as her new convictions permitted—"Yearly Meeting," "St. Giles' Schools' Bazaar," and the "African Meeting," at Freemason's Tavern, where she saw some old acquaintances—amongst them the Duke of Gloucester, of whom she says: "He seemed so glad to see me, and talked some time, retaining my hand in his. I hope friends behind were not scandalized!"

In 1829 Mrs. Opie revisited Paris, divided between regret and anticipation, deeply lamenting that she no longer had her husband beside her to share her pleasure, nor her father to whom to describe it; but resolved "to keep recollection at

bay." She sat to David for a medallion, which he said he wanted to take "because she had made him cry his eyes out." She wore her Quaker cap, which the French artists all declared resembled a Phrygian helmet, and had "*un air classique;*" and she said of the medallion when completed: "Though young and flattered, the thing is like, and David satisfied." She also made the acquaintance of Cuvier, the Duchesse de Broglie,* and La Fayette:—

"The hero of my childhood, the idol of my youth, and I have found him far beyond my idea of him, high raised as it was! He is a handsome man of seventy-two, humble, simple, and blushing like a girl at his own praises, with manners the most perfect possible, and his *bonhomie* is so striking that one almost forgets his greatness and his fame."†

On returning to England, Mrs. Opie received perhaps the most honourable of many tributes to the worth of her mind and character, in the shape of a letter from Southey; accompanying a volume of his "Colloquies," in which, after urging on Mrs. Fry the establishment of societies for reforming the management of hospitals and infirmaries, which should do for them what she had already done for

* Formerly Albertine de Staël.

† This admiration roused Miss Mitford's ire when the "Memorials" of Mrs. Opie were published: "Wasting so much good enthusiasm on that bag of wind, La Fayette—taken in by that humbug as he in turn was taken in by Louis Philippe!"

the prisons, he continues with a sort of stately fervour:—

"I have another woman in my mind's eye—one who has been the liveliest of the lively, the gayest of the gay, admired for her talents by those who knew her only in her writings, and esteemed for her worth by those who were acquainted with her in private life. One who, having grown up in the laxest sect of semi-Christians, felt the necessity of vital religion while attending on her father in the infirmity of old age, and who has now joined the lively faith for which her soul thirsted, not losing in the change her warmth of heart and cheerfulness of spirit, nor gaining by it any increase of sincerity and frankness, for with these Nature had endowed her, and society, even that of the great, had not corrupted them. The resolution, the activity, the genius, the benevolence required for such a work are to be found in her, and were she present in person as she is in imagination, I would say to her, 'Thou art the woman!'"*—"Colloquies," vol. ii. p. 322.

Not all the Quaker quietism brought to bear upon her could quench in Amelia Opie her fascinated interest in revolutions, and it is most amusingly characteristic to find her starting off to Paris in 1830 alone, and telling nobody of her resolution until she had started. On crossing the Place Royale she heard with intense delight some

* Could it—could it have been a little touch of feminine jealousy which made Caroline Bowles write to Southey that "Friend Amelia" was "radically vulgar in all her notions"? She adds with quick repentance, "I am abominably spiteful, I perceive, and in a very gossiping mood this evening."—"Correspondence of Robert Southey with Caroline Bowles." Dublin University Press Series, 1881. Page 105.

young men singing Casimir de la Vigne's "New National Song"—

"Pour briser leurs masses profondes,
Qui conduit nos drapeaux sanglants?
C'est la liberté des deux mondes—
C'est La Fayette, en cheveux blancs!"

The name of La Fayette was like a greeting from a friend, and added to the "extraordinary elevation of spirit" the adventure gave her. The memorable "three days" were, of course, long over before her arrival, and she was astonished to find how many of their traces had already been removed. In fact, but for the tricolour waving over the Tuileries, she might have doubted whether any revolution could have so recently taken place, though, a few weeks after her arrival in Paris, there were mutterings of a gathering storm — cordons formed round certain streets, the Générale beating, National Guards bivouacking before the Tuileries and in the Place Vendôme.

Mrs. Opie visited Madame de Genlis, "a really pretty old woman of eighty-seven, very unaffected, with nothing of smartness or state about her," who, on parting, embraced Mrs. Opie, exclaiming: "*Je vous aime!*" and at La Fayette's receptions she saw crowds of celebrities who drew from

her the very natural wish that they could "be ticketed" for the enlightenment of strangers.

Her Quaker friends at home, however, looked jealously at these little social and political excitements, including a quiet "seventh day" evening spent with Queen Marie Amélie and the Duchesse d'Orléans; and they told her she had better come back before she was "drawn away from the simplicity of the faith." Perhaps they had heard that the Saint Simoniennes were anxious to beguile the distinguished Englishwoman to their meetings. "What a triumph it would be to them," a Frenchman introduced by Cuvier said to Mrs. Opie, "to get off that little cap and exchange it for a large black hat and feathers!"—which, with a blue gown, formed the uniform of their sect.

Mr. Thomas Constable says that although only five years old when Mrs. Opie visited his father at Craigleith House, he remembers her bright and cheerful presence, and the delight given by her singing. "In 1834 I saw her again, when she had joined the Society of Friends. The lapse of eighteen years had carried her far beyond middle age, but her manner was cheerful as ever, and in her quaint and becoming attire of lavender and white she appeared to have gained instead of lost in personal comeliness."

The Halls, who were acquainted with Mrs. Opie for many years, thus describe her:—

"Despite somewhat of severity in her quick blue eye, her manner and appearance were extremely prepossessing. . . . Her carriage was erect, her step firm and rapid, her manner decided, her voice low and sweet in tone, her smile perfect sunshine. She 'flirted' a fan with the ease and grace of a Spanish donna, and if her bright, inquiring, and restless eyes made one rather nervous at a first interview, the charm of her smile and the winning grace of her nature placed one at ease after a few minutes' conversation. Still the incessant sparkling of those quick blue eyes told that 'e'en in the tranquillest climes, light breezes might ruffle the flower sometimes.' When we met in later life the restless manner was much calmed. As the face became less beautiful it grew more soft, less commanding, but more lovable."

If a little of the old leaven of love of beautiful adornment clung to the dainty delicacy and becoming arrangement of Mrs. Opie's Quaker cap and kerchief, she was true to the principles of her new sect in curbing her imagination. Mr. Hall (of course) asked her for a story for the *Amulet*:—

"Thou knowest, or thou ought to know," she replied, "that since I became a Friend I am not free to what is called *make a story*. I will write a *fact* for thy Annual, or any little matters of history, or truth, or a poem if thou wishest, but I must not *lye*, and say such and such a thing took place when it did not: dost thou understand me?"*

It would be difficult by means of extracts to give any idea of the old-world charm which still

* "Book of Memories." Virtue and Co., 1871. Page 169.

pervades Mrs. Opie's writings, as the odour of *pot pourri* clings to a china jar. It lies in the easy dialogue, the knowledge of human nature, the talent, as one of her critics says, "for perceiving truth without the process of reasoning," rather than in any detachable passage. Some of her "Tales from Real Life" can be read with interest in days in which the aspect of life is widely altered; especially "Lady Anne and Lady Jane," for its sharp and well-defined contrast—often drawn at more length and with less skill by later novelists—between the shallow, selfish, fascinating cousin Jane, who charms in spite of her faults, and the generous, high-principled, sharp-tongued cousin Anne, whose uncompromising honesty often prevents her pleasing even when she most desires to do so.

A recent book of recollections gives the only unpleasing account of Mrs. Opie on record:—

"I was taken one day while young to pay a visit to Mrs. Opie. . . . The house was of large and imposing dimensions, one of those ancient and magnificent mansions in Lincoln's Inn Fields now let in offices and occupied chiefly by lawyers. I thought her very gentle and amiable. She appeared to me elderly even at that time, yet she lived many years after, dying only in 1865, but she had then reached ninety-three. No one could see Mrs. Opie without being impressed by her calm quiet self-possessed manner. She seemed the personification of repose and unaffected dignity. . . . Mrs. Opie was a musician and sang well, but she was

apt to expect to be *asked* to sing whenever in society, and would then overdo matters by singing noisy *bravura* songs which did not always please. She also made enemies among her lady acquaintances by manifesting a disposition to take undue precedence of others on such occasions." *

No sectarian feeling could chill or narrow Mrs. Opie's generous appreciation of character. On reading the life of Sir James Mackintosh, she says (after acknowledging the justice of his strictures on her life of her husband, already quoted) :—

"He (Mackintosh) was no daring sceptic, but a *seeker* to the last, and fully do I believe he found and was accepted in the Redeemer. And he was kind to every one—oh, so truly kind! He loved to give pleasure, certainly, and those who do this have something at least that was in Christ Jesus."

Late in life Mrs. Opie made an expedition to Cornwall, to see the remaining members of her husband's family and the spots associated with his boyhood. The fine scenery and air so raised her elastic spirits that a too tender conscience was wounded: "I sometimes reprove myself for the happiness I feel," she writes, "and my health so perfect!" Her crowning joy was a visit to the castle on St. Michael's Mount, of which she writes :—

"The housekeeper said she wished me to stay a week, but I thought she would in her heart be very glad to get rid of a

* "Gossip of the Century," vol. ii. p. 480. The date of her death and the age attributed to her are incorrect.

crazy old gentlewoman, who came to look at the moon from the ramparts of the castle, as if she had no moon in her own country; and I don't doubt but she fancied me moonstruck, which idea was, I dare say, confirmed by her catching me drawing the faces and figures I saw in the fire, a new but, I assure thee, a very amusing occupation. . . . The sea is close round this magnificent mountain, with its masses of rock frowning midway down its verdant sides. And such a sea as it is in winter! They are shipless waters, for no vessel could live in them, and I did enjoy to see the waves of the Atlantic rolling proudly in on one side of the castle, telling of greater and more fearful power beyond, where my eye could not penetrate. . . . Next night I sat up till the moon rose, and, leaning on the balcony, witnessed her fight with the wind and the rain, and her ultimate victory. Such was the roughness of the sea that the white foam made 'the darkness light about it' without the aid of the moon. But where she did not shine on their jutting points, dark as Erebus were the turrets, the ramparts, and the walls of the castle; while the little town at the foot of the mountain, and the more distant town beyond, lay in a sort of half tint of moonshine, and the noble rocks over which I leaned were softened into beauty by the mellowing rays that rested on them."

After seven months in Cornwall, during which she wrote most of her "Lays for the Dead," and arranged them for publication, Mrs. Opie returned to Norwich, and met Dr. Chalmers at the house of the Gurneys. In his "Memoirs" Dr. Chalmers speaks of his pleasure in meeting the writer of "the most exquisite feminine tales," and also the difficulty of identifying the plain-looking Quakeress "Amelia" with the accomplished novelist Mrs. Opie, until they talked together while strolling

on the lawn after dinner, and he felt the charm of her "rich and interesting conversation."

A long tour in Scotland, and a yet longer one through Belgium and up the Rhine, furnished charming material for her letters and diaries; her enthusiasm for natural beauty and her keen sympathy with all aspects of humanity continuing undiminished by advancing age and one or two sharp illnesses. In 1835 she was re-established in "the Castle Meadow House, Norwich," where Opie's portraits of herself, her father, and their most intimate friends adorned the walls, and one of the windows was fitted with a frame containing prisms, for which she had, says her biographer, "a sort of passion." "Oh, the exquisite beauty of the prisms on my ceiling just now!" she writes; "it is a pleasure to exist only to look at it. I think green parrots and macaws flying about in their native woods, must look like that." Flowers, too, were "her constant companions; she luxuriated in them; filled her window-sills with stands of them, and her tables with bouquets. Light, heat, and fragrance were indispensable to her enjoyment."

Hospitality and correspondence occupied a large portion of her time; every visitor to Norwich who could find an introduction or a pretext sought her

out; and she calculated that the letters she wrote (excluding notes) averaged six a day. How many of these were answers to appeals for help, advice, and charity was only known by the piles of grateful acknowledgments discovered after her death. She used to say that if she had not enjoyed the occupation so much, her epitaph must have been "died of letter-writing." Lady Cork was still among her correspondents; her last letter, written two years later, was very characteristic:—

"London, March 15th.
"One thousand, eight hundred and thirty-seven.

"Thanks, dearest dear friend, for your cordial letter. Yes, thank God, 91 is well in health, and if my beloved friends enjoyed the same blessing would be perfectly content in mind. . . . Oh, why do you not come to town earlier in the season? There are many of your playfellows here. Yesterday dined with me Rogers, Sydney Smith, Granby, and more wits and worthies such as you would relish. . . . The picture of Hannah More is by Gainsborough; I think it a little like her. When she was young she could not afford to have *very fine long diamond earrings*, nor were they the fashion when I saw her flirting with Garrick. However, all the connoisseurs agree that it is an excellent painting. N.B.—There is a ring on the wedding finger which does not resemble blessed Hannah. Poets are springing up like mushrooms, but the novels are sad trash. . . . Yours more than words can express, says—

'OLD M. CORK."

When Mrs. Opie did go up to town she describes a dinner with Lord Brougham at Miss Berry's

Twickenham cottage; sitting to poor Haydon (who called her "that delightful creature") for his great picture of the "Meeting of the Anti-Slavery Convention;" Rogers' famous breakfasts; a dinner with Sydney Smith; a "friendship struck up with Sam Slick;" and gives some most entertaining reminiscences of poor Hogg, unfortunately too long to quote.

Her delight in oratory wherever it could be heard, and especially with the dramatic surroundings of the Assize Courts, never abated. A succession of Judges humoured her. We saw her seated on the Bench beside Judge Gould in 1785. In 1844 she writes:—

"The other evening, while Baron Alderson and the High Sheriff and I were talking together in the Judges' Room, Sir Edward Williams asked me how I was going home, on which the High Sheriff, seizing my hand, said, 'Oh, she shall go with us; we will take her home!' I drew back, of course, not believing he could be in earnest; but the Judge said, 'Yes, let us take her,' and Edward pulled me on, saying, 'Come, Brother Opie!' as he tucked me under his arm. The High Sheriff led the way, and into the carriage I jumped, ashamed but pleased. I sat by my cousin, and the astonished chaplain opposite the Judge, wondering and laughing. . . . Little did I think I should ever ride behind four horses and two outriders with trumpets, etc. . . . So much for the escapade of a grave Judge and High Sheriff."

And, may we not add, a demure Quakeress of seventy-four?

Nine happy and peaceful years she was still to spend in Norwich. Her sight perfect, her hearing little impaired, her carriage erect as ever. "Never, perhaps," says her biographer, "were so many young and fair faces seen clustering round an old one as were to be found in her room week after week;" all her young friends confided in her, secure of friendly comprehension; attracted, too, by "her love of fun, her merry laugh, her ready repartee"—and yet more, perhaps, by the wonderful charity and humility which would see faults in no one but herself.

Mrs. Opie still visited London now and then, on one occasion going to Claremont, oppressed by the thought of the changes in Louis Philippe's family since she had seen them last; Marie Amélie's greeting was, "*Ma chère, bonne Opie, que vous êtes bonne de venir me voir!*" and her farewell, "*Souvenez-vous, et écrivez encore, écrivez toujours!*" At Sir J. Boileau's she met Guizot, with whom she was "charmed. His manners are very simple, and he played at *jeux de société* with us *young* people at night, and enjoyed it as much as we did."

She visited the Great Exhibition of 1851, being one of the few persons admitted in bath chairs an hour before the general public. Another of

these privileged ones was Miss Berry, who, looking with admiration at her friend's conveyance, which had some superiority of make, exclaimed, "Where *did* you get that chair, Mrs. Opie? I quite envy it"—on which Mrs. Opie proposed a race on wheels!

In the following year she records a visit from Fanny Kemble, during which she was "denied to every one, as I had much to say to her. I much enjoyed her conversation."

She went to Cromer, and felt her old delight in watching the rising and falling of the tides, though now compelled to do so only from the windows of her room. On her return home she was carried upstairs in a basket-chair, "never to go down again." Her incurable malady, her severe and repeated attacks of rheumatic gout, and her extreme weakness, rapidly increased. But her patience and grateful love for those who unwearied watched by her never lessened; and almost her last connected utterances before her death on the 2nd of December, 1853, were "all is peace," and "all is mercy."

Miss Mitford exclaims, *sans phrase*, with reference to Mrs. Opie's becoming a Quakeress, "What a miserable hash she made of her own existence!" And Miss Kavanagh, at the end of an

admirable summary of her character and writings, says:—

"She joined the Society of Friends conscientiously, she adhered to it with perfect fidelity, and she never repented. But it was the work of the influence of zealous friends, and it changed little in her life. . . . It was a sacrifice, no doubt, but it was not made in the fervent and productive years; hence it never worked any of those radical changes which give so much significance to renunciation." *

Looking back on the record of Mrs. Opie's life, one hesitates to agree with either judgment. There was, indeed, as we have seen, a period during which, with the hyper-sensitiveness of a convert, she felt agonies of contrition for venial faults, and expressed remorse for indulging in harmless pleasures. But this soon passed, and beyond the renunciation of novel-writing (in which it is probable that her best work was done, for her imaginative vein was neither deep nor strong), her creed does not seem to have entailed any sacrifice of dear affection or reasonable enjoyment. On the other hand, it is impossible not to recognize, in comparing her earlier and later years, the increased activity in every form of benevolence and helpfulness to which it impelled her.

She had a temperament both excitable and indo-

* "English Women of Letters," by Julia Kavanagh. Edit. 1862. Page 288.

lent, and essentially pleasure-loving. With a sufficient income, absolute independence and leisure, many flatterers, and no close home ties or duties, she might easily have drifted into aimless self-indulgence in the world *où l'on s'amuse*, had she been without the restraints of deepened religious feeling, and a creed which especially enjoined temperance, moderation, and quietness.

SYDNEY OWENSON, LADY MORGAN.

"WHAT has a woman to do with dates—cold, false, erroneous, chronological dates?" asks Lady Morgan in her fragment of autobiography. "I take this opportunity of entering a protest against dates. I mean to have none of them!" * True to this spirited declaration, she mentions "ancient ould Dublin" as the place of her birth; but only says of the time, that it was "one Christmas Day in the latter half of the last century."

Her father was a comedian,—"as fine and genuine a specimen of the true Irish soil as the Irish wolf-hound,"—who, according to Chorley, "legitimately transformed his name of Macowen into Owenson for gentility's sake;" and the first abode his daughter could distinctly recollect was the "National Theatre Music Hall," of which he was deputy manager. It must have seemed

* Therefore, if these gleanings from her sayings and doings, and from what others have said of her, should prove somewhat unchronological, the compiler may perhaps plead precedent and excuse.

a strange and bewildering residence to Mrs. Owenson, a quiet woman (and a devout follower of the Countess of Huntingdon)—no longer in her first youth when she ran away from her Shropshire home with the lively and handsome young actor. Her theatrical domicile was only temporary; but the manager's dramatic and musical friends found their way to the private house in which the poor lady took refuge, and one of them at least—the famous Mrs. Billington—was so little to her taste that, when she paid a call, Mrs. Owenson fled to her bedroom and locked herself in until the too fascinating visitor had departed. A more welcome guest was the sister of Oliver Goldsmith, a plain little old woman, dressed in black and wearing a "coal-scuttle bonnet," who always carried in one hand a long tin case containing a roll of her brother's portraits.

Mrs. Owenson was not called upon to endure the vicissitudes of her husband's career for many years. After her death her children, Sydney and Olivia, were sent to a school near Dublin, attended also by Grattan's daughters. The elder of these girls introduced herself to the new-comers by saying, "My papa is the greatest man in Ireland. What is *your* papa?" "*My* papa," replied Sydney proudly, "is free of the six and ten per cents.!"

Sydney was about twelve years old, a precocious, impressionable child, already showing "an apt predisposition for all that was Irish"—its music, its poetry, its wild and imaginative fables —when Lord Thurles and some other leaders of Irish society proposed that Mr. Owenson should build a theatre in Kilkenny, then called "the Versailles of Ireland." The Marquis of Ormonde, willing to promote any scheme which might harmlessly occupy his alarming son, gave an excellent site for the theatre, and headed the building fund, and under such auspices the work went on apace. The sisters were sent for to join their sanguine father, and Sydney found studies for many of her subsequent heroes and heroines in the brilliant personages, "descendants of the Dunois and Bayards of the Battle of the Boyne," who made the clever actor and his interesting children very welcome amongst them.

Sydney first acquired a passion for pictures in the noble gallery of the Castle, and began to meditate writing a life of Rubens; while in a diocesan library placed at her disposal she found many old Irish works which fostered her dawning interest in the antiquities of her country.

These educational advantages were the most permanent afforded by the sojourn at Kilkenny.

The theatre only led to bankruptcy; and Sydney, Olivia, and their faithful nurse Molly were hurriedly deposited in Dublin lodgings during the tedious settlement of Mr. Owenson's affairs. Sydney wrote to him every day, letters brimming over with childish fun and womanly tenderness, making light of privations, turning difficulties into excellent jokes, and showing complete devotion to her luckless and improvident father, whose wit, good looks, and good humour she never tired of eulogizing.*

Sydney had already chosen literature as her profession, and she told Mr. Owenson that she was determined thenceforward not to cost him a penny, as she had two novels nearly ready for publication. But frequent battles with schoolmistresses and lodging-house keepers on the score of unpaid bills had taught her the necessity for an immediate supply of cash, so whilst finishing her stories she sought for employment as a governess. She was engaged by Mrs. Featherstonehaugh of Bracklin Castle, and her Dublin friends gave her a farewell dinner and dance, characteristically deferred until the very eve of her departure. Of

* About the time of the disastrous Kilkenny experiment, Mr. Owenson collected and printed a little volume of her not very promising verses, which he called "Poems by a Young Lady between Twelve and Fourteen."

course she danced until the last minute, and had to be hurried into the coach, wrapped in the first things that came to hand. After a brief rest at an inn, where a carriage from Bracklin was awaiting her, Sydney found to her dismay that when the mail-coach left it had carried away her boxes.

"Fancy, dear papa," she wrote, "my dreadful situation! My whole stock-in-trade consisted of a white muslin frock, pink silk stockings and shoes, Molly's warm cloak, and an old bonnet!" In this array Miss Owenson presented herself to a large party assembled in the Bracklin drawing-room, in the uncompromising light of a snowy morning. Her hosts naturally looked astonished at a governess who appeared in such a guise; but her skill in singing Irish songs and dancing Irish jigs won their Irish hearts, and many escapades in keeping with her first appearance on the scene were good-naturedly condoned.

When the Featherstonehaugh family went to Dublin for the season, Sir John Stevenson, who taught Sydney's pupils singing, took her and her sister Olivia, accompanied by his little daughter (afterwards the beautiful Marchioness of Headfort), to a musical party at the house of Moore's parents. The girls went home so bewitched by Tom Moore's songs that, Sydney writes, they

"forgot to undress themselves, lay down in their evening frocks, and awakened each other next morning singing 'Friend of my Soul!' Olivia rose to draw Moore's picture, which looked like a young negro rather than a young poet, and I sat down to my first inspiration for my 'Novice of St. Dominic'—the description of the minstrel under the window of the Lady Magdalen."

During this visit to Dublin her first novel was offered to a publisher. Of course he could give no immediate decision. The young author left no address, and when, after an interval spent at Bracklin, she returned to Dublin and paid some calls, she took up a book lying in a window-seat which proved to be her own "St. Clair." The remuneration she received consisted of four copies of the work. Resolving to try a publisher in London for her next novel, she also resolved to take it there herself; and, being in every respect an inexperienced traveller, she was so exhausted by the journey from Holyhead that when she got out of the coach in the yard of the Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane, she sat down on her box and fell asleep.

Sir Richard Phillips published "The Novice of St. Dominic,"* and was so far satisfied with its

* Pitt is said to have read it on his death-bed.

success as to offer two hundred pounds for the first edition of "The Wild Irish Girl," and fifty more for the second and the third. He was a very enthusiastic publisher. The letter which contains this proposal concludes: "Believe me always DEVOTEDLY your calculating lover, R. Phillips."

The calculating lover, hearing that a rival was in the field, added another fifty pounds to his offer, in a letter beginning, "Dear, bewitching, and deluding Syren." He could have had no reason to regret his liberality, for the success of the novel was startling, and Sydney Owenson "woke up one morning and found herself famous." In these days the book seems a curious jumble of Irish antiquities and history, patriotism and sentiment. And it tries one's sympathies to find the heroine saying of herself and her lover, "Thus, like the assymtoles of an hyperbola, without absolutely rushing into contact, we are, by a sweet impulsion, gradually approximating closer and closer towards each other."

The plot of "The Wild Irish Girl" was partly suggested by an episode in the author's life. A young scapegrace named Richard Everard fell madly in love with her. His father, knowing the youth to be idle and the maiden portionless, called on Sydney to urge her to give up her admirer,

and was so much fascinated that he proposed to her himself! The Glorvina of real life, however, did not marry either "Lord M——" or "Mortimer," though she seems to have given both father and son some encouragement, as she did up to a certain point to all her numerous suitors.

Among the disappointed ones, it is said, was John Wilson Croker, at that time beginning to be a notoriety in Dublin literary circles. Certainly the extreme bitterness of his attacks on Lady Morgan in later years seems to argue personal vindictiveness—sharply retaliated when she pilloried him as "Crawley" in "Florence Macarthy."

When Miss Owenson made her second pilgrimage to town, there was no more falling asleep in stable-yards, a solitary stranger. She was a lioness, and was hunted accordingly. Many years afterwards she wrote a full account of her "first London rout," given by the lively and eccentric Lady Cork,* to which every one had been invited "to meet the Wild Irish Girl."

Sydney vividly describes her nervous terrors as she ascended the marble staircase, with its gilt balustrade, at 7, New Burlington Street; and says that the first figure on which her eyes rested, after

* Dr. Johnson's "dear little dunce," and Fanny Burney's "honourable and charming Miss Monckton."

receiving Lady Cork's effusive welcome, was "a strikingly sullen-looking handsome creature, whose boyish person was distinguished by an air of singularity, vibrating between hauteur and shyness," who proved to be Byron, then, like herself, just stepping across the threshold of the Temple of Fame.

The "Wild Irish Girl" was presented to a crowd of celebrities, "too numerous to mention," her most amusing encounter occurring at supper, when a great actor made his tardy entrance:—

"Mr. Kemble was evidently much pre-occupied and a little exalted, and he appeared actuated by some intention which he had the will, but not the power, to execute. He was seated *vis-à-vis*, and had repeatedly stretched his arm across the table for the purpose, as I supposed, of helping himself to some boar's head. Alas! *my* head happened to be the object which fixed his attention, which, being a true Irish *cathah* head, dark, cropped, and curly, struck him as a particularly well-organized Brutus, and better than any in his *répertoire* of theatrical perukes. Succeeding at last in his purpose, he actually stuck his claws in my locks, and, addressing me in the deepest sepulchral tones, asked, 'Little girl, where did you buy your wig?'"*

The Duchess of Gordon also took the "Wild Irish Girl" under her wing, and invited her to a dance, with an injunction to be early in order that her hostess might inspect, and if necessary

* "The Book of the Boudoir," by Lady Morgan. Henry Colburn, 1829. Vol. i. pp. 109, 110.

improve, her toilette. The rooms were still in confusion when Sydney arrived, and she had just drawn near the only fire she could find in the suite, when a loud hammering caused her to look back:—

"There, mounted on a step-ladder behind me, stood a bulky elderly lady in a dimity wrapper and a round-eared cap, knocking up a garland of laurel over the picture of some hero of that day. Taking the elderly lady for a housekeeper, I asked her if the duchess was still in her dressing-room? 'No, child,' said she, 'the duchess is here, *telle que vous la voyez*, doing that which she can get none of her awkward squad to do for her;' and down sprang the activé lady of seventy, with a deep inspiration of fatigue, ejaculating, 'Gude God, but this pleasure is a toilsome thing!' So she bustled off, and in less time than could be imagined reappeared in the brightest spirits, and the brightest diamonds, and I had almost said the brightest looks that illumined her brilliant circle. . . . I spent the evening seated on the second flight of stairs between Lady Caroline Lamb and Monk Lewis. The beautiful Lady Oxford sat a few steps above us, the Aspasia of the Pericles who lay at her feet, wooing in Greek in spite of Johnson's denunciation against learning in love; while Payne Knight looked on with 'eyes malign, askance.' . . . At two in the morning Lady Caroline proposed that we should go and sup at Melbourne House, and return to waltz when her Grace's rooms should be thin. And so we did."*

From that time almost to the day of her death there were few places where the literary or fashionable leaders of society congregated, at home or

* "The Book of the Boudoir," vol. i. pp. 149–153.

abroad, in which she was not prominent. "She went everywhere, and knew every one," say her biographers. "She had the gift of making friends, and the still more valuable gift of retaining them."* Lovers, as we have seen, were more ephemeral things; the one for whom Sydney Owenson cared most, and who cared most for her, before she met Sir Charles Morgan, was Sir Charles Montague Ormsby, King's Counsel and M.P., "the ugliest and most accomplished gentleman in Ireland." He was overwhelmed with debt, from which he vainly strove to extricate himself, and she was surrounded by adorers, who made him bitterly jealous. But it was long before Sydney could be persuaded to dismiss him finally, and her letters and a ring she gave him were only restored to her on his death.

While Sydney was working out her destiny as a successful author, that of Olivia was decided in a different manner. Like her sister, she had early been compelled to leave the precarious shelter of her father's roof and become a governess. But her delicate health, sensitive nature, and remarkable beauty unfitted her for a struggling

* "Lady Morgan's Memoirs: Autobiography, Diaries, and Correspondence." (Allen, 1862.) Edited by Hepworth Dixon, who, however, in his preface, says, "Whatever escapes from the original author belongs of right to Miss Jewsbury."

life. In her first situation she became acquainted with Dr. (afterwards Sir Arthur) Clarke.

"One of the curiosities and celebrities of Dublin. A dwarf in height, a buck in dress, a wit, a musician, a verse-maker, a man of science, a lion and a lion-hunter. Such was the tiny, seductive, and most respectable gentleman who proposed to the charming governess of General Brownrigg's children. . . . He possessed the means of raising his wife above all the harassing anxieties of which she had seen so much, and offered a home for her father and for their faithful old servant Molly."

The marriage, which took place in 1808, was a very happy one. The bridegroom urged his brilliant sister-in-law to take up her abode with them, but she preferred an independent life in her lodgings, until another proposal was made to her, which, after some hesitation, she accepted.

Lord and Lady Abercorn had read "The Novice of St. Dominic" and "The Wild Irish Girl;" they were aware of the young author's accomplishments in music, dancing, and conversation; they had seen "Glorvina" herself, and fallen under the spell she exercised over all new acquaintances; and "they thought they would like to take the young woman of genius to live with them, and amuse them in their own house."

This house, Stanmore Priory, Sydney herself described as "a little town," where over a hundred and twenty people slept at the Christmas gather-

ing. The hostess was a typical fine lady of the period, good-natured, *inconséquente* and capricious. The host, an equally fine gentleman:—

"The groom of the chambers had orders to fumigate the rooms he occupied after liveried servants had been in them; the chambermaids were not allowed to touch his bed except in white kid gloves. He never sat down to table without his blue ribbon with the star and garter. He was extremely handsome, noble and courtly in his manner, a *roué*, a Tory, fastidious, luxurious, refined in habits, fascinating in address; *blasé* on pleasure and prosperity, yet capable of being amused by wit and interested in a new face."

The letters from Lord and Lady Abercorn to their "dear little Glo." show warm and genuine affection, in spite of the fastidiousness of the one and the whims of the other; but it is hinted that her position in their household had many drawbacks, not the least of which must have been the difficulty of standing equally well with a husband and wife who were on terms of "excessive politeness" with each other.

At Baron's Court and Stanmore Priory all the most distinguished men and women of the day assembled, and all took a cordial interest in the gay Irish girl, whose Irish tongue could be as beguiling in flattery as it was sharp in sarcasm and ready in retort. Between Lord Castlereagh* and Sydney Owenson there was

* Lord Castlereagh's friendship is said to have been of use to

the strong bond of a passion for music. Whole mornings they would spend together playing and singing through Italian operas, until some more impatient spirits among the guests, generally led by Lady Castlereagh, would break in on their harmony with a pandemonium of sound produced by tongs, poker, shovel, and any other instruments of torture on which they could lay hands.

Lord Hartington waltzed with Sydney until she split her white satin shoes, and seeing her dismay at the catastrophe, and being then on his way to Paris, ransacked that capital for the prettiest and most costly pair that could be had to replace them. And this was the time when she sat to Sir Thomas Lawrence for the portrait which forms the frontispiece to her memoirs, and combines a grace and elegance which it may partly owe to the artist, with a look of laughing malice in the half-closed eyes, and a mocking sweetness in the smile that were certainly the sitter's own. Of this portrait, the original wrote in later years when exasperated by the unflattering comments of an American visitor on her personal appearance :—

Sydney when she wanted to dispose of her next novel, "The Missionary." He drove her to town in his "chariot," made an appointment with her publisher to meet her in his own study, and stood by while the bargain was made.

"I appeal! I appeal from this *Caravaggio* of Boston to the Titian of his age and country. I appeal to you, Sir Thomas Lawrence! Would *you* have painted a short, squat, broad-faced, inexpressive, Frenchified, Greenland-seal-like lady of any age? Would any money have tempted you so to profane your immortal pencil? and yet you did paint this Lapland Venus. What is more, you painted her of her own free will and choice, gratuitously, and that too when rival duchesses were contending for the honour of reaching posterity, through your agency, with the beauties of Vandyke and Lely. Well, I appeal from the portrait drawn by the Yankee to yours, *et je m'en trouverai bien.* Gladly do I sweeten my imagination by the recollection of those times of youth and gaiety and splendour, in which, associated under the same roof, I sat for and you sketched that picture. I remember a Minister of State cracking jokes on one side of the table at which you were drawing; a royal princess" [Caroline, Princess of Wales] "suggesting hints on the other; the Roscius of the age" [Kemble] "stalking up and down the room with the stride of Macbeth and the look of Coriolanus, and half the beauties of future galleries fluttering round the exclusive patent-giver of pictorial immortality." *

But of all the new acquaintances formed during her residence with Lady Abercorn, the most important was Charles Morgan, who arrived at Baron's Court, as family physician, during one of Sydney's brief absences; and was so much alarmed by all he heard of her cleverness, that when the groom of the chambers announced "Miss Owenson," he sprang from his seat by Lady Abercorn, and jumped through the window into the garden below. This was quite enough

* "Book of the Boudoir," by Lady Morgan.

to make the one lady declare that he must be conquered, and the other that she would conquer him. The result was probably more serious than either of them at the outset contemplated. Within three months of Dr. Morgan's precipitate retreat from Sydney's presence he vowed that he could not, and would not, live without her.

"Barring his wild, unbounded love for me," Sydney wrote to her friend Mrs. Lefanu, "the creature is perfection. The most manly, I had almost said daring tone of mind, united to more goodness of heart and disposition than I ever met with in a human being! Even in this circle, where all is acquirement and accomplishment, it is confessed that his versatility of talent is unrivalled. There is scarcely any art or science he has not cultivated with success. He has so improved me in Italian and singing you cannot imagine. He is reckoned a handsome man . . . is just thirty, has a moderate property independent of his profession, is a member and fellow of twenty colleges and societies, and is a Cambridge man." *

Lord and Lady Abercorn powerfully seconded the impatient suitor. Before Sydney wrote to ask her father's consent, the ring and licence were in the house and the settlements were made; but she "battled off from day to day," and got permission to go to Dublin to bid adieu to Mr. Owenson and Lady Clarke, promising to return at the end of

* He was the staunch friend and supporter of Jenner in the days when the advocacy of vaccination brought little but calumny and opposition, and seems by all accounts to have been a sort of medical Admirable Crichton.

a fortnight. Far from keeping her word, she plunged at once into all the delights of a Dublin season, regardless of the protests and entreaties of her jealous and disappointed lover. In after years she confessed that she then behaved exceedingly ill, and "deserved to have lost the best husband that ever woman had." But at the time there is no doubt she thoroughly and mischievously enjoyed the torments she inflicted.

No young St. Preux ever wrote letters more passionately tender than this experienced physician —a man of science and a widower.* But, womanlike, his idol paid him scant attention until he began to get angry, and hinted that her coquetries and delays might end in a second broken engagement. Then she replied humbly, but not very flatteringly: "Yes, Morgan, I will be yours, I hope, I trust; God give me strength to go through with it!" And when he sent her a long disquisition on "The influence of mental cultivation on happiness," without any reference to their own affairs, she was completely vanquished, and wrote: "Give me, my dear philosopher, ten thousand more such

* He had given her some trifling commissions to execute for him, and in reply to her inquiries about them, writes: "There is but one commission as to which I am anxious, and that is, to love me as I do you EXCLUSIVELY. To prefer me to every other good; to think of me, speak of me, write to me, and look forward to our union as the completion of every wish. For so do I by you."

letters, that I may have ten thousand more excuses for loving you still better than I do. I glory in my own inferiority, when you give that exalted mind of yours fair play. I triumph in my conscious littleness. I say—*and this creature loves me!*"

Sydney returned to Baron's Court in December, 1811, feeling and looking like a naughty runaway child recaptured. The Marquis and Marchioness were stiff in their welcome, and made her feel that she had not "been good," and Sir Charles's delight only half reconciled her to her fate. She would, she afterwards said, have given anything to be able to escape. Probably Lady Abercorn suspected her state of mind, for one cold January morning, as she was cowering over the library fire in her morning gown, the Marchioness opened the door and said, "Glorvina, come upstairs directly and be married. There must be no more trifling!"

Taking Sydney's arm, Lady Abercorn led her to her own dressing-room, where a table was arranged for the ceremony, and the bridegroom, accompanied by the chaplain in full canonicals, awaited her. "The ceremony proceeded, and the Wild Irish Girl was married past redemption!" The event had at last taken her by surprise. None of the many visitors in the house knew of it; nor was it announced until, some days afterwards,

Lord Abercorn at dinner drank to "the health of Sir Charles * and Lady Morgan."

"A strangely-assorted pair they seemed to be, on a first glance," writes Chorley. "But the one suited the other admirably. He did something towards reducing the exuberance of her vanity, and directing her attention to courses of research. Her fame—for it amounted to fame—gave him access to circles of society which possibly he might never otherwise have entered."

"Sir Charles," writes Miss Jewsbury, "was a man of sweet and noble nature, generous, high-minded, with a vehement temper, excessively jealous of his wife's affection, but not in the least jealous of her genius and success. Lady Morgan held him in unbounded respect, and was rather afraid of him. Their opposite qualities, controlled by mutual good sense, produced the most agreeable effect. He kept her steady, and she kept him from stagnating into indolent repose." †

A heavy cloud was cast over Lady Morgan's first year of marriage by the death of her father, at the house of his son-in-law, Sir Arthur Clarke, to whom she wrote :—

"The tie which existed between us was not the common tie of father and child. He was the object for which I

* He had been knighted during his short engagement to Sydney Owenson.

† After marriage Lady Morgan made her husband the characteristic present of a collection of letters from her old "flames," endorsed "Youth, Love, and Folly."

laboured and wrote and lived, and nothing can fill up the place he held in my heart. My dear husband supports, comforts, and devotes himself to me, but he could not know how endearing poor papa was, or how much out of the ordinary run of fathers."

Soon after this event the Morgans withdrew from the Marquis of Abercorn's household, and settled in Kildare Street, Dublin, where Sir Charles established a good practice, and they both busied themselves with literature. "O'Donnel," the first novel published by Lady Morgan after her marriage, was an immense advance on its high-flown predecessors, and, like "Florence Macarthy," deserves to be remembered for its vivacious sketches of contemporary society * and its sympathetic portraits of the peasantry. Erin, with the "tear and the smile in her eye," was never more truthfully painted; and Lady Morgan's patriotism was by no means blind.

In all Dublin gaieties she was of course conspicuous. At the vice-regal drawing-rooms, held by the Marquis and Marchioness of Wellesley, one who knew her writes:—

* "One almost wonders," says Miss Jewsbury, "that some of the fine ladies whom Lady Morgan produced in her works, etching them in *aqua fortis* and colouring them to the life, did not assassinate her by way of return, especially as she invariably introduced a sketch of herself in one corner of her pictures, taking up all the wisdom and common sense going, as well as being the most agreeable character in the story!"

"Every woman present wore feathers and trains, but Lady Morgan scorned both appendages. Hardly more than four feet high, with a slightly curved spine and uneven shoulders and eyes, which, however, were large and brilliantly blue, she glided about in a close-cropped wig bound by a solid fillet of gold, her face all animation, and with a witty word for everybody."

In the dress-circle at the theatre, where she was cheered enthusiastically, the same observer notes—"A red Celtic cloak, fastened by a gold Irish Tara brooch, gave her little ladyship a gorgeous and withal a picturesque appearance." *

"Of her toilette," says Chorley, "which was largely, during her whole life, made by her own hands, she was comically and without concealment vain. I remember to have heard her describe a party at a 'Mrs. Leo Hunter's' (who received all manner of celebrities at what she called her *morning soirées*, without the slightest power of appreciating anything *but* the celebrity). 'There,' she said, 'was Miss Jane Porter, looking like a shabby Canoness.† There was Mrs. Somerville, in an astronomical cap. *I* dashed in, in my blue

* "Lady Morgan," by W. J. Fitzpatrick. Skeet, 1860. Page 245.

† Since this paper appeared in *Temple Bar* for March, 1893, it has been pointed out that Lady Morgan's phrase was not figurative, Miss Porter having actually been a Canoness of the Teutonic Order of St Joachim, the habit of which she wears in some of her portraits.

satin and point lace, and showed them how an authoress ought to dress.'" *

This must have been the occasion, on one of her visits to London, described more in detail by Lady Morgan herself:—

"At Lady Stepney's I met poor dear Jane Porter, who told me she was 'taken for me' a few nights before, and talked to as such by a party of Americans. She is tall, lank, lean, and lackadaisical, dressed in the deepest black, with a battered black gauze hat, and the air of a regular Melpomene. I am the reverse of all this, and, *sans vanité*, the best dressed woman wherever I go. Last night I wore a blue satin, trimmed fully with magnificent point lace, and stomacher *à la Sevigné*, light blue velvet hat and feather, with an aigrette of diamonds and sapphires. *Voilà!* Lord Jeffrey came up to me and we had such a flirtation! When he comes to Ireland we are to go to Donnybrook Fair together. Having cut me down with his tomahawk as a reviewer, he smothers me with roses as a man."

When Lady Morgan's "France" was in contemplation in 1815, she and Sir Charles visited Paris, taking letters of introduction which opened to them both Royalist and Napoleonic circles. Many of their new acquaintances—amongst them Cuvier, Denon, Madame Paterson-Bonaparte, Lafayette, and the Comte de Segur—remained their friends for life. The book which was the result of this expedition was received with a frenzy of admiration, and an equal frenzy of abuse, the

* "Henry Fothergill Chorley: Autobiography, Memoir and Letters." Bentley & Son, 1873. Vol. i. p. 238.

scars left by which the author felt to her latest day. "Her notoriety," says her biographer, "was beyond what any other woman has ever had to endure who kept her good fame. That this notoriety had a scathing and deteriorating influence cannot be denied. But in the heat of so much party scandal no aspersion was ever cast upon her personal character." The position seems rather incomprehensible now. But those were not days when "wild women" went about talking and writing on every subject under the sun, often with a brutal candour which puts the inferior sex to the blush.

In 1818 Colburn offered Sir Charles and Lady Morgan £2000 to write in conjunction a work on Italy. The offer was accepted, and going to town to complete their arrangements they found the publisher reading the proofs of "Florence Macarthy," which he had purchased (with a scientific work by Sir Charles thrown in) for £1200. He was so charmed with the novel that he "rushed out and bought a beautiful *parure* of amethysts" for the lucky author. The sojourn in London was made as gay as possible by crowds of friends, the oddest and most amusing of whom were Lady Caroline Lamb and Lady Cork. The Morgans lodged in Conduit Street.

"Lady Cork's most curious and beautiful house is in the next street, and every morning I am sure to have a note from M. Cork and Orrery* brought by an elfin page. She takes us about everywhere, and makes parties for us of all sorts of colours. I must explain. She said to me one day—'My dear, I have pink for the exclusives, blue for the literary, grey for the religious—for I have them all in their turns; then I have one party of all sorts, and I have no colour for it.' 'Oh,' said I, 'call it dun-ducketty mud-colour.' She laughed and adopted it." †

At a concert given by Lady Charleville—

"Morgan entered the room with Mrs. Opie on one arm and me on the other. Conceive the formidable sight! Sir George Smart presided at the piano. Crivelli (an heroic singer in the *grand sérieux*) was divine, and Ambrogetti sang all Leperello's songs with exquisite humour. A young lady of fashion played the harp with one hand and the piano with the other." [We are still barbarous in some things, but we have got beyond this.] "Sir G. Smart and ourselves exchanged looks of disgust. The person that interested me most was Lady Sarah Bunbury,‡ the king's first passion, and

* She once wrote to an upholsterer in the City for something that had caught her fancy *en passant*, and received this reply—"D. B. not having any dealings with M. Cork and Orrery, begs to have a more explicit order, finding that the house is not known in the trade."

† "Passages from my Autobiography," by Sydney, Lady Morgan. London, Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1859. Page 29.

‡ "*Bunbury*" must have been a slip of the pen, as at this time she was married to General Napier, and the mother of heroes.

once the most beautiful woman in England. Imagine a dignified though infirm old lady, stone blind, led in! Mrs. Fitzherbert sat next me; I never saw such lovely blue eyes. She still appeared to me what I thought her when I was a little child and saw her picture—fat, fair, and forty."

Arriving in France, the Morgans proceeded to visit General Lafayette at La Grange. An odd incident occurred *en route.*

"At Grandeville the general's carriage met us. Whilst our trunks were being changed we joined a group standing *bouche béante* opposite the *auberge.* Their curiosity was directed to an open window, before which every now and then a most fantastic object presented itself. I asked a 'nice young man' standing near us what it meant. He said, '*Oh, c'est Miladi Morgan, qui a si bien parlé de nos autres industriels dans son petit livre sur "la France." Elle attend la voiture du Général Lafayette.*' At that moment the 'Lady Morgan' came to the window. It is impossible to describe anything so grotesque. A head powdered and *crêpé*, two feet high; several *couches* of rouge on her cheek, and more than one on her chin, black patches *à discrétion;* a dress of damask silk with scarlet flowers. She had on what was called a *mantille de vieille dame;* she was apparently any age over seventy. She was fanning herself, and appeared highly flattered by the homage paid to her charms—she could suspect no other source. In a few minutes she came out, and entered one of those curious little vehicles called a *désobligeante*, such as one still meets with in the *chemins de travers* in France. It was driven by a little dumpty coachman in a livery as old and rusty as if he had served in the Fronde; it was a scene from Molière realized. She smiled and bowed graciously as she passed the crowd. Hitherto Morgan had kept me quiet, but my vanity at last broke bounds. My charming *chapeau de paille* with its poppy flowers, my French cashmere and my coquetry, which, young

or old, will go with me to my grave, could stand it no longer. As I was stepping into the La Grange carriage I turned to the 'nice young man' who handed me in, and said, '*Je suis*, moi, *la véritable Lady Morgan.*' He said he guessed as much, and announced to the *bons gens* who I was, and we drove off amid *vivats* and laughter."

Lady Morgan gives a very ample account of this second visit to Paris in her "Diary" (sometimes called "The Odd Volume"),* which is full of good stories and vivid descriptions. She tells how Benjamin Constant, faithless to his sometime idol, mimicked Albertine de Staël (Duchesse de Broglie), presenting her mother with a branch of laurel—with which she was always provided—when she saw "inspiration coming strong upon her." And how he declared that "Corinne" had vainly smiled on the Comte de Rivarol, who, meeting her one night at a *bal masqué*, turned abruptly away. "*De quelle déesse voulez-vous échapper donc?*" asked the friend who accompanied him—"and how do you know the mask?" "*Par le pied de Staël,*" replied the cruel Comte.

She records Denon's picturesque sketches of the chief actors in the Congress of Vienna (1814), where, he said, Madame Krudener was the ruling spirit—the greatest actress he ever saw, too melo-

* "Diary of Lady Morgan." Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1859.

dramatic for a Clairon or a Mars, but quite good enough for an audience of kings and emperors. How she wore white cashmere gathered into a silver girdle, her golden tresses flowing over an alabaster neck. How she had—

"The air of having been flung on a crimson velvet sofa piled with cushions." Two or three crowned heads were always in attendance: "Alexander on one side, dressed for effect in black and diamonds, the King of Prussia, remarkable by contrast, on the other. . . . In the midst of a solemn silence she rose, and extending her arms, exclaimed, in a strange and penetrating voice, '*Prions!*' and down on his knees went the Emperor of all the Russias, followed by everybody present—kings, aides-de-camp, and valets."

During this description Humboldt was announced; "he is like the elephant," says Lady Morgan, "who can with equal ease tear down an oak or pick up a pin. With me he always picks up the pin."

One of the oddest compliments paid to Lady Morgan while in Paris this time was making her a Freemason; there being then a "Loge Ecossaise, Belle et Bonne," of which Madame de Villette was Grande Maîtresse. The installation was a dazzling ceremony. The Grande Maîtresse, in white satin and diamonds, wearing Voltaire's portrait as an order, received the neophytes. Prince Paul of Wurtemburg, the Archimandrite of Jerusalem, Talma, and many other notabilities were present.

Draperies of crimson and gold, heaps of flowers, clouds of incense, and the wild music of Boucher combined to make the scene impressive.

"We took the vows, but as to *the secret*, it shall never pass these lips in holy silence sealed. That so many women, young, beautiful, and worldly, should never have revealed it is among the miracles the much distrusted sex is capable of working. . . . The *loge* lasted two hours. During the whole time my eyes were fixed on the Archimandrite of Jerusalem, and Talma, who had the same expression he wore in *Néron* when bothered by Agrippa's lectures—stern ennui personified. The Archbishop tried to look pious, but as it was the piety of the Greek Church I did not understand it."

Among Lady Morgan's kindest and wisest correspondents was Lady Charleville, one of the few good women who had a good word to say for George IV. He had been kind to her child when ill at Brighton, and although she had refused all former invitations to the Pavilion ("for those things I delight not in"), she went thither in her wheeled chair to thank him.

"Believe me," she writes, "the Regent has a heart; and I am only surprised that, surrounded as an heir apparent is, every mouth and every eye taught to express assent, and the truth never suffered near him—I say I am only surprised that he is human. . . . It gave me pleasure to find 'Florence Macarthy' on his table, and to hear him say, when I took it up, 'I hope you like the Eagle and O'Leary. I never read anything more delightful or more pathetic than Cumhal's catastrophe. Croker may rail on, he'll do her no harm! D—— blackguard, to abuse a woman, isn't it?

Couldn't he let her 'France' alone, if it be all lies, and read her novels, and thank her, *by Jasus!* for being a good Irishwoman?" *

In Italy the Morgans had the same social success as in France. In an old Florentine palace, while talking to Tom Moore—always a favourite of hers †—and gazing on "the cloud-capped Apennines which seemed to be walking in at the window," Lady Morgan received a distinguished visitor. "I had just time," she says, "to whisper to Moore" [it was rather an Irish whisper]—"'The widow of the Pretender—your legitimate queen—and the lover of your brother poet Alfieri,' when the Comtesse d'Albany entered. She could be the most agreeable woman in the world; and throughout this flattering visit she was so. She could also be the most disagreeable. For, like most great ladies, her temper was uncertain, and her natural hauteur, when not subdued by her brilliant bursts of good-humour, was occasionally revolting. Still,

* Of his personal appearance we get an odd glimpse in a letter from Hamilton Rowan to Sir Charles Morgan. "I have seen many caricatures which are strong likenesses of the originals, but until I saw George IV. I never met a person who in features, contour, and general mien outdid their caricature. Hone's likeness in the 'House that Jack Built' is a flattery."

† She once improvised a dinner-party for him in Dublin, in a very droll way. 'I threw up my windows, and asked my friends as they drove by in their cabs and carriages, and sent out some penny porters, and lighted up my rooms. Moore was absolutely astounded when he saw my assemblage," she writes.

she loved fun, and no sally of wit or humour could offend her."

Lady Morgan was disappointed in the beauty of Pauline, Princess Borghese, with whom she became intimate in Rome, and who told her that it was "noble of her not to fall heavy on the unfortunate" in her "France."* But she was much impressed by Madame Mère.

"I never saw so fine an old lady—still quite handsome. She was dressed in rich crimson velvet trimmed with sable, with a point lace ruff and headdress. The pictures of her sons hung round the room, all in royal robes, and her daughters and grandchildren, and at the head of them all, *old Mr. Bonaparte!* Every time she mentioned Napoleon the tears came into her eyes. She is full of sense, feeling, and spirit."

Pasta was one of the new acquaintances in whom Lady Morgan most delighted. Her patriotism (which had nearly cost her imprisonment), her strong family affection, and her naïveté, were all after the "wild Irishwoman's" own heart. "I was *une petite demoiselle*," the cantatrice explained, "singing and playing in an amateur company in Milan. Pasta and I played together, fell in love,

* The princess praised her chamberlain to Lady Morgan, saying, "*C'est l'homme du monde le plus respectable. C'était le chancelier pour mon Duché, car mon frère ne m'a pas donné de Royaume.*" "Oh," adds Lady Morgan, "for the *nonchalante* air with which, in the intervals of two sips of chocolate, 'my brother did not give me a kingdom' was uttered!"

and married." Paer sent for them to Paris. "I so wished to travel that I would have gone *même l'enfer!* I came out in London in *Télémaque.* I was so ashamed of showing my legs! Instead of minding my singing I was always hiding my legs! I failed." Lady Morgan spoke of her fame: "*Gloire passagère,*" she replied; "it is here to-day, and gone to-morrow. Yours endures."

"'I remember,' said Lady Morgan, 'being in your dressing-room one night when you had just come off the stage in your highest-wrought scene. Your maid had a bit of roast beef ready to put in your mouth, and some porter,' '*Ah, si,*' was her reply, '*mais je ne prends plus la viande*, and, *pour le* porter, I take it half and half!' This bit of London slang from the lips of Medea, and in her sweet broken English, had the oddest effect imaginable."

Taglioni—"quiet, lady-like, and simple," told Lady Morgan that her two rules were "never to make any effort," but to give herself up to her extreme delight in dancing—and to "bathe her feet in arrowroot water." *

Lady Morgan asked Paganini if he were not "the happiest man in the world—every day acquiring so much fame and so much money." He sighed, and said he should be but for one thing—

* "What a blessing is self-approbation!" says Chorley. "In Lady Morgan's case I am satisfied it was sincere. She had no Statute of Limitations, and absolutely professed to have taught Taglioni to dance an Irish jig!"

"*i Ragazzi*—the little ragamuffins who ran after him in the streets." He then told her, "in an odd, simple, Italian, gossipping way," of his humble birth, his playing the guitar and singing in the church services at four years old, and composing a cantata and learning the violin at seven. Also of the patronage of the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, his luckless love-affair while in her household, and yet more luckless marriage. "While telling me all this he rolled his eyes in a most extraordinary way, really and truly demoniacal. Still, he seems to me to be a stupefied and almost idiotic creature."

Dining at the palace of the Archbishop of Taranto, the Morgans met some unexpected guests:—

"Between the first and second courses the door opened, and several enormously large and beautiful cats were introduced by the names of Pantaleone, Desdemona, Otello, etc. They took their places on chairs near the table, and were as silent, as motionless, as well-behaved as London *bon ton* could require. On the bishop requesting one of the chaplains to assist the Signora Desdemona to something, the butler stepped up to his lordship, and observed, 'Desdemona will prefer waiting for the roasts.'"

"Italy" proved almost as successful as "France," and received high commendation from Byron. For the "Life and Times of Salvator Rosa," her next great task, Lady Morgan received £500 from

Colburn. But she exhibited an unreasonable—though by no means unusual—annoyance at the idea that her publisher as well as herself had profited by the book, and they had some financial quarrels over it. A more serious one was to follow.

Lady Morgan's second book on "France" is spoken of by her biographers as "the work in which her peculiar genius had the fairest play and the fullest development." There had been no understanding with Colburn about its publication, but "he considered that Lady Morgan was bound to him in literary matrimony, for better for worse, and behaved with a cool security not suited to her character." Having written to him twice on the subject without eliciting an offer, Lady Morgan opened negotiations with Saunders and Otley, and let Mr. Colburn know what she had done. In reply he wrote to Sir Charles, saying that if she did not immediately return to her allegiance it would be "no less detrimental to her literary than to her pecuniary interest." And the way in which he carried out his threat was by an advertisement in all the current papers headed,

"LADY MORGAN AT HALF-PRICE;"

stating that in consequence of the great losses he had sustained on her former works he had declined

the present book on "France," and copies of all her previous works might be had at a great reduction! Saunders and Otley then wished to be released from their bargain, as they were losers on every item, besides the sums paid and promised to the author. Finally, the whole matter came into court, and Mr. Colburn admitted that he had been "so enraged at losing Lady Morgan's work that he had done everything he could to injure her literary reputation and damage the sale of the book; that he regretted what he had done under the influence of wounded feeling, and that he took that opportunity of retracting what he had said in her disparagement." Lady Morgan herself declared that he behaved throughout "like an angry lover seeking a reconciliation with his mistress!"

Returning to Kildare Street, Lady Morgan took with her a new acquisition, of which she was inordinately proud:—

"Neither she nor Sir Charles knew the difference between a good carriage and a bad one; a carriage was a carriage to them. It never was known where this vehicle was bought, except that she declared it came from 'the first carriage builder in London.' In shape it was a grasshopper, as well as in colour. Very high and very springy, with enormous wheels, difficult to get in, and dangerous to get out. Sir Charles, who never in his life before had mounted a coach-box, was persuaded by his wife to 'drive his own carriage.' He was extremely short-sighted, and wore large green spectacles

when out of doors. His coat was much trimmed with fur, and braided. Their tall Irish footman,* in the brightest of red plush, sat beside him, his office being to jump off whenever anybody was knocked down or run over; for Sir Charles drove as it pleased God. The horse was mercifully a very quiet animal, and much too small for the carriage, or the mischief would have been more. Lady Morgan, in the large bonnet of the period, and a cloak lined with fur hanging over the back of the carriage, gave, as she conceived, the crowning grace to a neat and elegant turn-out. The only drawback to her satisfaction was the alarm caused by Sir Charles's driving, and she was incessantly springing up to adjure him to 'Take care!' to which he would reply with warmth, after the manner of husbands."

Lady Morgan was about to leave Dublin in the spring of 1828, living in her dressing-room, with the carpets up and the curtains down—and had just returned from

"a long, dreary drive, tired, cold, covered with dust, when a thundering knock came to the door. J. Thomas flew to open it; enter a creature fine and foppish—a sort of Tartar turned dandy—who asked, in a foreign accent, for Lady Morgan. Thomas sulky as a pig, because he 'hates my lady having them furriners,' cried, 'I don't think my lady is at home; but I'll thry, sir. Who shall I say, sir?' 'The Prince Pucklau Muskau.' Away went Thomas, tumbling down the kitchen stairs—

* This man was a genius in his way. Being kept waiting a long time one evening for his master, when he had to go on for Lady Morgan and Prince Pucklau Muskau, he wrote an expostulation in these terms: "*Sir Charless!* Me lady will be very unhapy and sariously blame me for ye not forthcoming. Ye most obedient and very humble servant, Thos. Grant."

'Jack fell down and broke his crown,
And Jill (Morgan with a bottle in his hand) came tumbling after.'

I tumbled upstairs, to the drawing-room, and stood in all my dust and dowdiness to receive l'Altezza, whom *le cher* T. announced as Prince Pickling Mustard (just as last summer he persisted in calling Prince Cimatelli, Prince Vermicelli). Well, I put the best face (a dirty one) I could on it and endeavoured to excuse things. The prince put me at once at my ease. *Hélas!* I shall have to unpaper and unpack my room and ask him to dinner when he returns from Wicklow."

She showed the inopportune guest many attentions, and was disposed to lionize him, but when his book came out,* denounced him as "the Prince of Darkness" for the account he gave of herself in it. "The conversations he reports were utterly false," she says. But perhaps the sharpest sting lay in his description of her as "a little, frivolous, lively woman, between thirty and forty, neither pretty nor ugly, but by no means disposed to resign all claim to the former, and with really fine and expressive eyes." Adding—

"She has no idea of *mauvaise honte* or embarrassment" [why should she have had any?]; "her manners are not the most refined, and affect the *aisance* and levity of the fashionable world, which, however, do not sit calmly or naturally upon her. She has the English weakness, that of talking incessantly of fashionable acquaintances, and trying to pass for very *recherché* to a degree quite unworthy of a woman of such distinguished talents. She is not at all

* It was translated some years later by Mrs. Austin.

aware how she thus underrates herself. She is not difficult to know, for with more vivacity than good taste she instantly professes perfect openness. . . . In her writings she is far more guarded and dignified than in her conversation. The satire of the latter is, however, not less biting and dexterous than that of her pen, and just as little remarkable for a conscientious regard to truth."

On his second visit, the Prince admits that Lady Morgan has "talent and feeling enough always to excite a lively interest in her conversation. On the whole, I think I did not say enough in her favour in my former letter." But much better than Sir Charles and Lady Morgan does the Prince like Sir Charles and Lady Clarke, Lady Morgan's brother-in-law and her idolized sister:

"The medical knight of whom I now speak is a very interesting man. His wife seemed to me still more remarkable for talent. She is very superior to her celebrated relative in accurate tact and judgment, and possesses an extraordinary power of mimicry, whose comic bent does not always spare her own family. The daughters, though perfectly different, are both very original, the one in the gentle, the other in the wild *genre*; . . . the young ladies keep a burlesque journal, in which they chronicle their daily *fata*, illustrated with the most extravagant drawings. We sing,* talk, or act pictures, in which the mother, with her talent for the drama, contrives admirable dresses out of the most heterogeneous materials. You would have laughed if you had seen the 'wild Irish girl,' with moustaches and whiskers marked with charcoal, pocket handkerchief and stick in her hand, come in as my caricature. These girls

* Elsewhere he calls them "the little nightingales."

have an inexhaustible fund of grace and vivacity, extremely un-English, but truly Irish. The elder, who is eighteen, has brown eyes and hair of a most singular kind and expression; the latter has a sort of deep golden hue without being red, and in the former is a tranquil, humid glow over which comes at times a perfectly red light like that of fire. Yet it always remains only an intense glow, not a lightning flash like that which often glances from the eyes of the little wild girl. With her all is flame, and under her maidenly blushes there often breaks out the determination and high spirit of a boy."*

On his return to Dublin, Prince Pucklau Muskau spent the greater part of his time with the Morgans and their relations. But Sir Charles, doubtful as to how the Prince would be received, advised him *not* to attend a public dinner given by the "friends of civil and religious liberty." "He seemed struck and mortified. I tremble for the consequences," writes Lady Morgan, tragically; "it is just as well not to be married, for marriage is but another name for suffering." Lady Morgan's nieces, "the darlings in Great George Street," mischievously amused themselves by writing challenges to Sir Charles in the Prince's name, with caricatures of the duel she anticipated. Neither the Prince nor Sir Charles had the remotest idea of pushing their difference of opinion to such desperate consequences, but Lady Morgan's apprehensions were quite genuine, and the first entry

* "Tour of a German Prince: a Series of Letters," Wilson, 1832. Vol. ii. pp. 111, 112.

in her diary after his departure was—"*Thank God, the Prince is gone!*"

Among other Irish recollections we find the origin of a famous *mot* of Lord Beaconsfield's—or, if not its origin, a remarkable coincidence. After a dinner given by Lord Dungarvan, Lady Morgan enters in her diary :—

"The second time in my life that I met the redoubtable Dan O'Connell.* Dan is not brilliant in private life, not even agreeable. He is mild, silent, unassuming, apparently absorbed, and an utter stranger to the give-and-take charm of good society. I said so to Lord Clanricarde, who replied, 'If you knew how I found him this morning! His hall, the very steps of his door, crowded with his *clientèle.* He had a word or a written order for each, then hurried off to the Law Courts, thence to the Improvement Society, and was the first guest here to-day. Two hours before he was making that clever but violent speech to Mr. La Touche; and now no wonder that he looks like *an extinct volcano.*"

A passage in Madame de Genlis' "Mémoires"

* Their first meeting was in 1826, at Dublin Castle. "Thirty years ago," she wrote then, "the roof would not have been deemed safe which afforded that 'first flower of the earth, first gem of the sea,' shelter. He wants back the days of Brian Borru, himself to be the king, with a crown of emerald shamrocks, a train of yellow velvet, and a mantle of Irish tabinet. A sceptre in one hand and a cross in the other, and the people crying, 'Long live King O'Connell!'" His actual costume was remarkable enough. "Some rain has fallen, and the fields are beginning to look almost as green as O'Connell, for he walks about in the full dress of a verdant Liberator; even to a green cravat, a green watch-ribbon, and a slashing shining green hat-band; and he has a confident hope that the tears of Ireland will prevent the colours from ever fading!"

roused Sir Charles Morgan's indignation on behalf of his wife, but does not seem very invidious. The sting lay in "n'est pas belle."

"Je dois parler ici de Lady Morgan. Je suis charmée d'avoir fait connoissance avec une personne justement célébré, à beaucoup d'égards. J'avoue d'ailleurs qu'elle me séduisit par une sorte de cordialité qui donne une prix infini à ses éloges. Lady Morgan n'est pas belle, mais il y a quelque chose d'agréable et d'animé dans sa personne; elle a beaucoup d'esprit, elle paroît avoir de la bonté, il est dommage que, pour se faire des partisans, elle ait la manie de se meler de politique. Elle dit avec grâce que son extrême vivacité et sa démarche un peu sautillante parurant fort étranges dans les cercles de Paris, parce qu'elles contrastoient avec les manières Françaises. Elle connut bientôt que le bon goût même prescrit cette espèce de maintien."*

It has been said that Lady Morgan regarded her husband with pride and affection. She exulted in the deference paid him by learned men at home and abroad; she watched him while she talked to serious people of weighty matters—"not unobservant of me, being always afraid of my getting out of my depth, which I generally do, though, like other light things, I somehow contrive to float."† She told him after one of

* "Mémoires Inédits de Mme. La Comtesse de Genlis." A Paris et Londres chez Colburn, New Burlington Street, 1825. Tome sixième, p. 86.

† According to Chorley, Lady Morgan contrived to get out of her depth on subjects and occasions when one would have expected *esprit de corps* to keep her well within it. "I heard her ask, in all sincerity and simplicity, at a literary party, 'Who was Jeremy

her *soirées*, "You always say the best thing that is said; only, for the battledore and shuttlecock of conversation you are perhaps too sententious in manner." "Perhaps," he replied, '*Non ho avuto tempo d'esser breve*,' as Casti says."

"Morgan," she writes in her diary, "has made a *précis* of the statistics of Geneva that is quite wonderful. How strongly and finely opposed is his clear, Anglo-Saxon intellect and profound reflection to my flimsy, fussy, flirty Celtic temperament, by courtesy called mind, which gives me the title among my dear compatriots of being such a talented creature!"

He had the best influence on her conduct in some weighty matters. In 1831 she writes:—

"The cholera is approaching. I proposed to Morgan that we should retire from Dublin. He stopped me short by saying that his post was where there was most danger. His view of the case changed my whole feeling on the subject. He *must* stay, and therefore I *will* stay; so last night we set about thinking what was wisest and best to be done for the poor prisoners of the Marshalsea. We think we have succeeded. He has gone to examine the state of the prison, and make his proposals to the Lord-Lieutenant."

Taylor?' on some reference to that distinguished divine. I think she had some notion of the Taylors of Ongar! But more absurd still was her introduction to the stately, grave, and accomplished Mrs. Sarah Austin" [mother of Lady Duff Gordon] "when she complimented her sister authoress on having written 'Pride and Prejudice.'"

Was this "in all sincerity and simplicity," or a little sly fun?

A few years later, when Lord Melbourne gave Lady Morgan a pension of £300 a year—very acceptable in consequence of her failing sight and Sir Charles's uncompensated loss of a Government appointment which was abolished—Dublin was quitted, and finally, for London. It has been oddly asserted that Catholic Emancipation, in which she and her husband took the keenest interest, "vulgarized Dublin society and banished Lady Morgan." However that may have been, she settled in 11, William Street, Hyde Park. Of course, "everybody who was anybody" was soon on her visiting list; but it seems curious, remembering her warm and lifelong friendship for Madame Paterson-Bonaparte, that Jerome, ex-King of Westphalia, should have figured there. Her letters and diaries are thickly sprinkled with sketches of celebrities: Mrs. Bulwer Lytton, "handsome, insolent, and unamiable," who, she says, "like all the *half-esprits*, looked daggers" at her; Disraeli—"that egregious coxcomb, outraging the privilege a young man has of being absurd." The Duchess of St. Albans—"a coarse, full-blown, dark-complexioned woman, dressed," to receive a morning call, "in rich white silk trimmed with white lace, a quantity of gold chains, bracelets, etc. Her black ringlets were sur-

mounted by a black lace veil, which fell on one side. Last time I saw her was as Miss Mellon, in 'The Honeymoon,' when I came over to sell my 'Wild Irish Girl.' She was then a model of beauty, symmetry, and grace."

About this time Lady Morgan became acquainted with her clever countrywoman Mrs. S. C. Hall, who speaks of "the humour that dimpled round her mouth and sparkled in her eyes;" and adds: "The natural intonations of her voice in conversation were so pleasing as to render her nothings pleasant, and, whatever affectation hovered about her large green fan, or was seen in the way she had of folding her draperies round her and looking out of them with true Irish *espièglerie*, the tones of that voice were to the last full of feeling." *

During years which have necessarily been lightly passed over, Lady Morgan was busy with many books, not always, chiefly owing to her quarrel with Colburn, successful. "The Princess; or, The Béguine," for which she went to Belgium to study her scenery, and in which she used much material collected for a life of Rubens, was published by Mr. Bentley—Colburn's successor—and was more fortunate.

* "Book of Memories," page 222. Virtue, 1871.

Murray is said once to have contemplated utilizing her talents in a new direction. He was always looking out for new contributors to his "Domestic Cookery," and when Moore told him that Lady Morgan would like to write something for his "Library," replied—"Isn't she a good cook?" "Why, you don't mean that she should write a cookery book for you?" cried Moore, horror-stricken. "No," was the calm reply, "but I thought she might re-edit mine!" *

Lady Morgan's niece, Sydney, who had become Mrs. Laurence, and was living in London, gave her aunt an interesting account of the burning of the Royal Exchange:

"It was splendidly awful to see the beautiful dome all in a blaze, and falling piece by piece into the flames below, the bells chiming their last in the midst of the fire. Strange to say, the last tune they chimed, at twelve o'clock, was 'There is na luck about the house.' It quite affected me to hear it, and had a *choking* effect upon us all, for the bells literally dropped one by one as they were playing the tune."

In 1843 Lady Morgan records the death of another niece. "My dear, dear Olivia, my *hereafter* in this world; gentle, spiritual, intellectual, unselfish beyond all comparison." Sir Charles, seeing her overwhelming grief, said, "Oh, Sydney, if you grieve thus for a niece whom you seldom

* "A Publisher and his Friends," vol. ii. p. 123.

see, what is to become of you if *I* go?" The question startled her into self-control, and, to distract her thoughts, Sir Charles drove her to Richmond, where they walked quietly in the park, and she returned to town "in better spirits, with Morgan beside me."

This was their last expedition together. A short time afterwards Sir Charles had an attack of heart-disease, and sank under it before any one even anticipated danger. The next entry in her diary, long after her loss, is touching.

"Oh, my husband! I cannot endure this. I was quite unprepared for this. So ends my life. The winter fire kindles for me alone now. The chair, the lamp, the books, the paper-cutter, all these are here this November—gloomy, wretched November. How I used to long for social, home-girt November! Now I spend it in wandering through this deserted house." Then, in the following spring—"Time applied to grief is a worldly commonplace. Time has its due influence over visible grief; it softens sighs and dries tears, but *le fond* remains the same. Time gives you back the exercise of your faculties and your habits, but the loss of that which was part of yourself remains for ever."

Sorrows were heaped upon her. In the following year her sister, Lady Clarke, died—through life her dearest and most faithful friend, her closest confidante; a woman whose wit was as sparkling as her heart was warm and her temper sweet:—

"All my old friends and new acquaintances have been to my door to offer sympathy, but I am beyond the reach of solace now. . . . Books, pictures, flowers, everything has the touch of death on it! And that park so near me—of which my beloved Morgan used to say, 'It is ours more than the Queen's; we use it daily and enjoy it nightly'—that I worked so hard to get an entrance into" [the Albert Gate] "seems to me covered with black crape."

The veil was lifted a little in the years which intervened between these bitter griefs and her own death, although, as she said, "the *meaning* of life was gone." Chorley, who had been severe on her early follies, says: "She accepted what was becoming to advanced years with a grace almost amounting to dignity, hardly to have been expected from one who had so long defied time, and who found herself alone in the world." She mixed again in society, and enjoyed a controversy with Cardinal Wiseman as to the authenticity of the chair of St. Peter in the Vatican, which she asserted had been found to bear the startling inscription, "There is but one God, and Mahomet is His Prophet," having probably been part of the spoil of the Crusaders; and she was fascinated by "the fairy-like beauty of the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park"—the Great Exhibition of 1851.

Naturally the later pages of her diary are mainly obituary. She sees Rogers in his last days—"the ghost of his former ghost"—and

hears that Moore is bedridden, and has lost his memory; remembers nothing but some of his own early songs, which he sings as he lies. Eliot Warburton, whose happy marriage had, Lady Morgan believed, been "made" on her little balcony in William Street, is lost in the burning of the *Amazon;* Charles Kemble—"the last of the dynasty—beautiful, graceful, gallant," is called away. At last the summons comes for the chronicler herself.

Christmas Day, 1858, was her last birthday. She assembled a few of her remaining friends at dinner, and "did the honours with all the *verve* and brilliance of her brightest days." She told stories and sang songs, and none present could realize how many birthdays had preceded the one they were celebrating. She began the following year with energetic work on her "Odd Volume," and an appearance of enthusiasm and hope which were the last flicker of the lamp. On St. Patrick's Day she gave a musical *matinée;* but a week afterwards caught a cold, which became serious; and expired on April 16th in the arms of her beloved niece and namesake. She was buried in Brompton Cemetery.

And so passed away "one of the most peculiar and original literary characters of the century,

composed of natural genius, acquired accomplishments, audacity that flew at the highest game, extreme liberality of opinions, extremely narrow literary sympathies . . . a compound of the most startling contradictions, impossible to be overlooked or forgotten;" and also a woman whose native kindness of heart, increasing with age, led her to caution a younger friend, who spoke of some one she "hated"—"*Ah! ma chère, ne vous chargez pas des haines*—it is only the young who are severe."

MISS MITFORD.

"THE memory of Leigh Hunt," wrote Edmund Ollier, "is a perfume in the heart of literature;" a *pot pourri*, one might say, expanding the simile, in which subtle essences and Eastern spices are blent with English rose-leaves.

The memory of Mary Russell Mitford has its perfume too—the scent of new-mown hay in dewy meadows, the breath of wild briar and hawthorn from country hedgerows. She was the first Englishwoman from whose graceful and sympathetic pen came studies of rural scenery equally faithful and charming, whose humour and pathos, unforced and unexaggerated, are true alike to "Nature and human nature." Others, in later years, have passed her on the same path—however dear to memory "Our Village" may be, Mrs. Gaskell's "Cranford" is a greater work of art—but it would be ungrateful to forget that Miss Mitford led the way.

It was an unusual combination of powers which

made this shrewd delineator of rural manners also one of the few women dramatists whose works have succeeded not only in the library, but on the boards. Her plays are no longer acted, her stories no longer read, but she still lives in her letters: strongly prejudiced, excessive in praise of those she loved, but lively, observant, obviously sincere, and deriving a pathetic interest from the life of self-sacrifice and hard work, the sunny side of which they usually chronicle.

Towards the end of last century there lived at Alresford, Hampshire, "in the oppressive solitude of a large house, and with no companion but her father's library," Mary Russell, the last representative of a branch of the great Bedford family. She was no longer young, and more than ordinarily plain, but she had a good figure, a kind heart, and the substantial charms of houses, land, and twenty-eight thousand pounds. The latter attractions, it is to be feared, weighed most heavily with the handsome young doctor, gay and clever, idle, selfish, and extravagant, who, having run through his share of the rent-roll of the Mitfords of Bertram Castle Northumberland, married the gentle heiress, his senior by ten years, in 1785.

Their only child Mary Russell Mitford, born two years later, was precociously intelligent. At

three years old she was perched on the breakfast-table to read the Whig newspaper to her father's guests, and her own favourite study was "Percy's Reliques." She early and fully appreciated the handsome comfort of her mother's old-fashioned home, so minutely and lovingly depicted in her "Recollections of a Literary Life;" but unfortunately she was not long allowed to enjoy it. Dr. Mitford, scathingly described by Chorley in the Introduction to the second series of Miss Mitford's letters as "a robust, showy, wasteful profligate, . . . a schemer in bubble companies, a gambler in London whist clubs," quickly dissipated his wife's ample fortune. The home was broken up, the library sold, and when Mary was eight years old the free country life she loved was exchanged for a dreary refuge within the rules of the King's Bench.

There was nothing more to lose; but it was an age of speculation, and therefore something might yet be won. Accordingly Dr. Mitford took his little girl to a lottery office, made her choose a number, and, by a strange freak of fortune, became the happy possessor of twenty thousand pounds. The greatest benefit Mary herself obtained from this strange turn of Fortune's wheel was her education at a school opened in Hans Place,

Chelsea, by M. and Mme. St. Quintin, with the assistance of Miss Rowden, who had formerly been governess in the family of Lord Bessborough, and who excited her pupil's emulation by writing and publishing some poems long since forgotten.* The school was, indeed, somewhat of a blue-stocking nursery. Poor L. E. L. was educated there in later years; Lady Caroline Lamb, whom her school-fellow calls "mad as a March hare," and other women who obtained a passing literary reputation, spent some years within its walls.

"At this time, Mary Mitford was short for her age; and—there is no possibility of evading the word by any gentle synonym—she was, in very plain English, decidedly fat. Her face, of which the expression was kind, gentle, and intelligent, ought to have been handsome, for the features were all separately good and like her father's, but from some almost imperceptible disproportion, and the total change of colouring, the beauty had evanesced. But although very plain in figure and face she was never common-looking. She showed in her countenance and in her mild self-possession that she was no ordinary child. And with her sweet smile, her gentle temper, her animated conversation, her keen enjoyment of life, and her incomparable voice — that 'excellent thing in women' — there were few of the prettiest children of her age who won so much love and admiration as little Mary Mitford. And, except that her hair became white at an early age, few

* Miss Mitford's affection far outran her judgment when she called these effusions "a most happy mixture of the polish of Rogers and the animation of Campbell."

persons, in passing through so many vicissitudes of life, ever altered so little either in character or appearance." *

While at Hans Place Mary worked hard, voluntarily adding Latin to the course of study prescribed for her, joining with equal earnestness in the plays and ballets performed by her school-fellows, and taking great interest in the aristocratic *émigrés* entertained by the St. Quintins on Saturday evenings.

"Wonderful and admirable it was," she says, "to see how the dukes and duchesses, marshals and marquises, chevaliers and bishops bore up under their unparalleled reverses! How they laughed and talked and flirted and squabbled, constant to their high heels, their rouge and their furbelows, to their old liaisons, their polished sarcasms, and their cherished rivalries." †

From infancy Mary had been the companion as well as the plaything of her parents, and the letters they exchanged during her five years at Hans Place are remarkable not only for their absolute frankness and affection, but for the perfect equality—much more rare at that time than the present—on which the correspondents stand. Indeed, the school-girl of eleven years old is sometimes startlingly plain spoken, as when she tells Dr. Mitford that she hopes she may be

* "Life of Mary Russell Mitford, related in a Selection from her Letters." Bentley, 1870. Vol. i. pp. 13, 14.

† "Recollections of a Literary Life."

mistaken in her bad opinion of her aunt, but she certainly has "the most hypocritical drawl I ever heard."

While his daughter was still at Chelsea, Dr. Mitford bought an estate at Grasely near Reading, on which stood a picturesque old farm, in former times a manor-house. For this, with its oak staircases, wainscoted walls, oriel windows, and secret chambers, Dr. Mitford substituted a commonplace modern "desirable residence," intending, when "Bertram House" had risen from the ashes of "Grasely Court," to take up the *rôle* of country gentleman. This did all very well in the coursing season, but when there was no such excitement at hand, long and expensive visits to London were necessary to his existence, and made serious inroads on what remained from the proceeds of the lottery ticket.

At fifteen Mary left school with golden opinions from her masters and mistresses, plenty of prizes, and much commendation for "an English composition on 'Balloons,' and one on 'Amiable Manners.'" She entered with great zest into the occupations of a young lady of the period, dancing at the race balls, paying visits with her mother in the green chariot, or lying on a sofa with her dog by her side, reading a most extraordinary medley

of books, good, bad, and indifferent. She was an ardent politician, and hung a bust of Fox, as a sort of patron saint, at the head of her bed; but a visit to London dispelled one of her cherished illusions:

"I had the happiness (?)," she writes to her mother, "of seeing Mr. Fox mount his horse on Saturday. I shall never again contend for his beauty. He was obliged to lean on two people, and looked so sallow in face and so unwieldy in person that I am obliged to yield one long-disputed point. . . . To make amends, my new favourite [Whitbread] is what even you would call exquisitely handsome; a most elegant figure, and a voice which I could listen to with transport even if he spoke in an unknown language." *

In 1806 Dr. Mitford took his daughter to Northumberland, on a round of visits to their relations, during which her letters to her mother were very minute and amusing. They were met on their journey by Dr. Mitford's cousin, Lady Charles Aynsley, who drove them to Little Harle Tower.

"You would have been greatly amused," writes Miss Mitford, "at my having my hair cut by Lord Charles's *friseur*, who is by occupation a joiner, and actually attended with an apron covered with glue, and a rule in his hand instead of scissors."

The Duchess of Northumberland—"a most lovely woman, dressed with particular elegance in

* "Life of Mary Russell Mitford," edited by the Rev. A. G. L'Estrange. Bentley, 1870. Vol. i. p. 34.

a red shawl, gown, and a helmet of diamonds"—was very kind to the little country cousin, made much of her at Alnwick, and took her to the sessions ball. She enjoyed this immensely, but on the return journey the coachman lost his way, and Lord Charles and the footman were obliged "to walk before the carriage with candles to find out a cross-country road." Morning calls in the "North Countrie" appear to have been made inconveniently early, for one day "three people called before we were up, and four more before we had done breakfast!"

While Miss Mitford was staying at Lord Grey's she was disagreeably surprised to hear that, without a word to her, Dr. Mitford had suddenly returned to Reading to assist in Mr. Shaw-Lefevre's electioneering, leaving her to take care of herself, and find her way back to Berkshire as best she might—no pleasant prospect for an inexperienced girl in posting days. "In the name of goodness, my dearest mamma," she implores, "send him back directly!"

But "the most beloved of men," intent on his own amusement, would not go, until tempted by the opportunity of busying himself in the Morpeth and Newcastle elections also. To reward his political zeal he was made a magistrate, but the

new dignity did not keep him at home, and his frequent journeys to town were sometimes shared by his daughter, who stayed with Miss Rowden, and under her auspices saw much "blue" society, as a member of which she qualified, in 1810, by publishing a volume of "Miscellaneous Poems." The printer's bill for this work astonished and alarmed her, especially as the taxes had not been paid, and in consequence Dr. Mitford's pictures were threatened with seizure in the King's name.

This little difficulty, however, seems to have been temporarily adjusted, and Miss Mitford, undaunted by the printer's bill, set to work on a narrative poem. Her father, remaining in town, is adjured to employ all his fascinations on his daughter's behalf.

"It is very kind of Mr. Perry," of the *Morning Chronicle*, "to invite you to meet Mr. Brougham, and I am sure it will be greatly in my favour. You advertise my poems *vivâ voce*, you know, my dearest, and your manners and conversation are the greatest recommendations."

Miss Mitford's editors, kind-hearted William Harness, who knew her all her life, and her later friend, the more fastidious critic, Henry Chorley, regard her "filial blindness" with the puzzled and somewhat jealous indignation men are apt to show when their women friends devote themselves to an obviously clay-footed idol—father, brother, or

husband. But the genuineness of Miss Mitford's faith in her father's advocacy is beyond all question. He is directed to cultivate the acquaintance of Richard Cumberland, with a view to possible good notices, and to take the proof of "Christina" to Coleridge for corrections. The most important alteration made was cutting out a tribute to a brother poet, on which even tranquil Mrs. Mitford waxes indignant:

"Were the poem mine," she says, "I would have braved any censure as to what he terms 'bad lines,' being convinced he would have found them beautiful had they not contained a compliment to Walter Scott. I am extremely angry. It is a most extraordinary liberty Mr. Coleridge has taken, and will, I hope, be the last he will attempt." *

The young poetess herself, though so famous in after-life for sunny sweetness of temper, was at this time anything but a "patient Grisel." When her "itty boy," as she was fond of her calling her father—and a most spoilt and troublesome child she often found him—sent her a pair of ill-fitting gloves, he had a sharp rebuke:

"Pray do people wear their hands prayer fashion in a leather muff, with thumbs and five fingers? It must be so, for you never could mean those machines that you sent me

* Dr. Mitford's own chosen associates were of a different order —men such as Cobbett, one of whose notes to him ends, with characteristic grace and amiability, "God bless you, and d—— the ministers!"

for gloves! You fitted them upon the shopman, did you? I really should have thought you had tried them upon an elephant."

And of the wretched printer (a nephew of Dr. Valpy, and Miss Mitford's playfellow in childhood), whose delays as well as his charges excited her wrath, she says:

"The very mention of my book makes my fingers tingle with a desire to box John Valpy's ears. . . . John Valpy is quite entirely a fool! To think of offering us three copies of my book! I really do think that I should have thrown them at his head, and taken my chance of his bringing an action against me."

Chorley, in his preface to the second series of Miss Mitford's "Letters,"* speaks of Mrs. Mitford as "somewhat characterless," apparently because she neither prevented her husband's selfish extravagances nor suffered them to destroy her affection for him. But a man of his stamp is the very last to be subject to domestic control, and a passage from one of his wife's letters, written when she was dismissing her servants and preparing to leave Bertram House in order to reduce their expenditure, whilst he was amusing himself in London, shows no want of dignity or feeling:

"As to our present difficulties, it avails not how they originated. The only question is, how they can be most

* Bentley, 1872. 2 vols.

speedily and effectually put an end to. I ask for no details which you do not voluntarily choose to give. A forced confidence my whole soul would revolt at, and the pain it would give you to offer it would be far short of what I should suffer in receiving it."

In 1810 Miss Mitford was introduced to her father's friend, Sir William Elford, Recorder of Plymouth, Fellow of the Royal and Linnæan Societies, an exhibitor in the Royal Academy, and a writer of verses which have not survived him. A strong liking sprang up between the amateur of sixty-four and the little poetess of twenty-three; she sent him her book, he painted a picture for her; and a correspondence followed in which Miss Mitford poured out all her feelings, opinions, and experiences with a confiding and enthusiastic frankness usually reserved by a girl for girl friends. She begins by being rather formal and lofty, but soon throws aside the heavy Johnsonian mantle and reveals her lively natural self. She tells him that she took Miss Rowden the authoress of the "Pleasures of Friendship," to hear Coleridge lecture on—

"Poets and critics, and whipping little boys, and Milton and Shakespeare, and love and philosophy, and every subject that ever entered the head of man. . . . The orator had been more than usually brilliant, and I had just got Miss R. to confess that he really was tolerable (a wonderful confession considering she was a *lady*, and determined to dis-

like him), when to my utter dismay he began a period as follows : 'There are certain poems—or things called poems —which have obtained considerable fame—or that which is called fame in the world. I mean the Pleasures of Tea-drinking, and the Pleasures of Wine-drinking, and the Pleasures of Love, and the Pleasures of Nonsense, and the Pleasures of Hope.' There, thank God, the list ended, for his censure was only aimed at Campbell, whom he proceeded to abuse. But think what I felt when he was going on with his 'Pleasures,' and I expected the 'Pleasures of Friendship,' to come out every moment. Mr. Rogers was just by, so that Miss Rowden had the comfort of company in her sensations, whatever they might be, but they had the wit to keep them to themselves."

When there is a prospect of meeting Sir William in town, she writes :

"You will find me just the same plain, awkward, blushing thing whom you profess to remember. Only I think the almost hermit life that I have led for the last year has improved all these enchanting characteristics. . . . I must not forget to prepare you for the deplorable increase of my beautiful person. My dear friend, it is really terrible. Papa talks of taking down the doors, and widening the chairs, and new-hanging the five-barred gates, and plagues me so that any one but myself would grow thin with fretting ; but I can't fret. I only laugh, and that makes it worse."

The "hermit life" was broken in upon in 1814, when Miss Mitford went to London with her father, and at the dinner of the "British and Foreign School Society" at Freemasons' Hall heard "a poetical tribute" of her own sung amidst enthusiastic applause.

"I did not believe my ears," she tells her mother, "when Lord Lansdowne, with his usual graceful eloquence, gave my health. I did not believe them when my old friend the Duke of Kent, observing that Lord Lansdowne's voice was not always strong enough to penetrate the depths of that immense assembly, reiterated it with stentorian lungs. Still less did I believe my ears when it was drunk with 'three times three,' a flourish of drums and trumpets from the Duke of Kent's band, and the continued plaudits of five hundred people. I did not believe my own ears. I really thought it must be Mr. Whitbread. And though I wondered how he could be 'fair and amiable,' I still thought it him, till he rose to make the beautiful speech of which you have only a faint outline in the *Chronicle*. The praises he bestowed on me still ring in my ears, and if you find me vainer than any peacock, I beg you to attribute it to the overset which my brains experienced on Friday. Everybody tells me such a compliment to a young untitled woman is absolutely unprecedented."

There were plenty of lions for the little Berkshire damsel, suddenly elevated into a lioness, to gaze at, and some of her criticisms have the merit, if it be one, of singularity:

"Well, I went to see Kean, and was thoroughly disgusted. This monarch of the stage is a little, insignificant man, slightly deformed, strangely ungraceful, seldom pleasing the eye, still seldomer satisfying the ear—with a voice between grunting and croaking, a perpetual hoarseness which suffocates his words, and a vulgarity of manner which his admirers are pleased to call nature—the nature of Teniers it may be, not that of Rafaelle. I am sure that where there is anything like strong writing that he can contrive to rant, or anything resembling passion for him to tear to rags, his acting will always be unequal, disappointing, and destructive

of all illusion. It is extremely dangerous to avow this heresy."

At one of Mr. Perry's parties the Duke of Sussex took Miss Mitford in to dinner:

"Nothing could have exceeded the civility of that royal porpoise. Never surely did man eat, drink, or swear so much, or talk such bad English. He is a fine exemplification of the difference between speaking and talking; for his speeches, except that they are mouthy and wordy and commonplace, and entirely without ideas, are really not much amiss."

Few letters offer so many temptations as these to linger and to quote. Whether serious or playful, they always reflect the writer's quick observation and warm heart. When she laughs it is so genially that even the laughed at must forgive her. She foretells a great future for Talfourd when he has yet done nothing but publish, at sixteen, "a volume of most stupid poems," and make her "mind ache" with the brilliance of his conversation, as her eyes would ache if looking at the sun. She describes Moore's singing as "a modulated sigh." She gives a very amusing account of the erection of Bearwood, by the founder of the Walter family. She tells how, at a Reading election, her portly father and the slim candidate, Tyshe Palmer ("like a tall hop-pole, or a long fishing rod, or anything that is all length and no substance; three or four yards of

brown thread would be as much like him as anything, if one could contrive to make it stand upright"), riding through the town side by side, are greeted with shouts of "Fish and Flesh for ever!" She deliciously characterizes *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* as "a very libellous, wicked, story-telling, entertaining work, a sort of a chapel of ease to my old friend the *Quarterly*." She quotes a letter from Mrs. Hofland, who informs her that:

"The Wordsworths never dine. They hate such doings. When they are hungry they go to the cupboard and eat, and really it is much the best way. There is Mr. Wordsworth, who will live for a month on cold beef and the next on cold bacon—and my husband will insist on a hot dinner every day."

Then we have a portrait of Campbell:

"Do you happen to know Mr. Campbell? I dare say not. I do. Oh, he is such a pretty little, delicate, finical gentleman! He would look well in a mob cap, hemming a pocket-handkerchief, or in a crape turban, flirting a fan. He is such a doubter—such a hummer and hawer, such a critical Lord Eldon, so heavy and so slow!"

She is very saucy about her sisters of the pen, although she admits that Miss Austen is pretty and Miss Edgeworth presentable.

"George Whittaker has given me 'Cœur de Lion,' by Miss Porden" (afterwards the devoted wife of Sir John Frankland), "to review. . . . She's a very pleasant young woman, and her conversation is easy and natural. She is ugly, of course. All literary ladies are so. I never met one

in my life (except Miss Jane Porter, and she is rather *passée*) that might not have served for a scarecrow to keep the birds from the cherries."

There is no intimation that Miss Mitford ever looked forward to marriage. It would seem that she was never invited to do so by any one at a sufficiently romantic distance from her own surroundings.

"Love," she tells Sir William, "never flourishes so luxuriantly as when distance and difference of fortune or station give full scope to the imagination. A castle or a cottage; a prince or a peasant; a Swede or an Italian, may all give full play to the poetry of the heart. But to fall in love with a stupid man who lives in the next town in a brick house, with a walled garden—whose father and mother, grandfather and grandmother, aunts and brothers you have been tired of all your life—to fall in love with such a man as that is really more than impossible!"

This is quite in keeping with what she tells the same correspondent is her ambition—"to be tall, pale, thin, have dark eyes and write *gracefully* in prose."

The peasant lover did indeed appear on the scene once—by letter; but possibly Miss Mitford thought he would be less endurable in reality than in imagination. A communication from a young Scot was found among her papers, which affords such a quaint and artless picture of his life and enthusiasm, and is such a tribute to the far-

reaching charm of Miss Mitford's writings, that some passages from it may be given here, though it belongs to a rather later period of her story. He begins by saying that it is "Hogmany" (New Year's Eve), and he is somewhat elevated in spirit; and adds that he has already had several visionary loves:—

"*You*, for more than a year back," he proceeds, "have been my beau-ideal, and are likely to remain so, because my liking for you is founded on realities, and not on imaginings, as the others were. I have never seen you. To see you might make me love you more, but could not possibly make me love you less, for it is your heart, feelings, thoughts, genius that I love; they accord so beautifully with my own I sometimes think you are me. I mean, though I could no more write like you than fly, that if I could write, I would write exactly the same. Now, what puzzles me is this: I wonder how you can possibly be a woman. I never saw a celebrated female writer in my life. Of how you look, and how you conduct yourself in private and among friends, I cannot form the slightest conception. Male authors one has some idea of—I have seen two, Sir Walter Scott, and Mr. Jeffreys in the Court of Sessions—but you go beyond my grasp. There is Miss Baillie, and Mrs. Hemans, and Miss Landon, and yourself. I am not *very* anxious to see Miss Baillie—I suppose she's a sort of nun; nor Mrs. H.—I take her to go swimming like a fine tragic queen; nor Miss L. . . . But you above all things in the world I would like to see."

He goes on to explain that his mother, to whom he reads "Our Village" aloud, wished to see him "wag his pow in a pulpit," but that he

preferred—occasionally—to learn weaving, with a view of becoming a Glasgow manufacturer, adding that it is well he need not depend on this remote prospect, as he is "singularly lazy," and likes "a dunner by Kelvin side" better than anything else.

"Were you ever in Scotland?" he continues. "It is a foolish notion, but could anything be more beautiful than the thought of you (a fine English lady) asking the way to our house, and I putting you on your right path, knowing you afterwards to be Miss Mitford? Or, what is better, suppose you storm-stead, and obliged to seek shelter with us. Oh, delicious! To see you sitting at the fireside, cracking with my mother, while I would be ransacking the presses for everything drinkable and eatable. In such dreams I am for ever indulging. Dear madam, excuse my freedom, but I love you with all my soul."

Next to knowing Miss Mitford herself, he says, he would like to know the particulars of her life. "There is no one in this village can tell me anything about you. The minister himself is grossly ignorant" [there is a fine contempt here]. "We have not now got a circulating library; it was too near Glasgow to thrive, and I am no ways acquainted with Glasgow. I am therefore famishing for the want of books."* It is easy to imagine the mixture of mirth and compassion with which Miss Mitford must have read this unique declara-

* "Friendships of Mary Russell Mitford," edited by the Rev. G. A. L'Estrange. Hurst & Blackett, 1882. Vol. i. pp. 177–180.

tion, and rather surprising to find no trace of her having sent her humble adorer a kindly message. But possibly she feared lest even a word of encouragement might have brought him in person, a "pilgrim of love," to her feet, and dreaded the "noble rage" into which such an arrival would certainly have thrown her father.

Mrs. Hofland evidently thought that the very confidential and voluminous correspondence with Sir William Elford "meant something," as the gossips say; and that as he had congenial tastes and a handsome fortune, and the trifling difference of forty years in age was on the right side, he ought to be smiled upon. But Miss Mitford replied:

"I shall not marry Sir W. Elford, for which there is a remarkably good reason, the said Sir W. having no sort of desire to marry me; neither shall I marry anybody. I know myself well enough to be sure that if any man were silly enough to wish such a thing, and I silly enough to say *yes*, a timely fit of wisdom would come upon me and I should run away from the church door."

Besides, she adds, Sir William has "an outrageous fondness" for her letters—"and marrying a favourite correspondent would be like killing the goose that laid the golden eggs."

There were circumstances, however, under which, she owns, even she could have contemplated matri-

mony. The threatened parting from Bertram House became imminent, and in 1819 she writes to Mrs. Hofland:

"Our Mr. Elliott has been here, and this long affair, this Chancery suit of eight years, was settled in eight minutes. He takes possession at Michaelmas, and I have not a notion where we shall go. But for the ill-luck of Mr. Elliott's having a wife, I need not move at all, since but for that misfortune he says he would have had me himself. I wish you had seen him when he made this declaration. Imagine a little, mean-looking Bond Street shopkeeper of sixty-five, with a Methodist face, all bile and wrinkles, and sadness, and a spruce wig in fine curls, shining like a horse-chestnut! I would certainly have married him, though, but for the aforesaid impediment. I would take anybody that would marry me to these walls and trees."

In March, 1820, the blow fell. Dr. Mitford having, by an extraordinary combination of extravagance and ill-luck, dragged his family from affluence through many degrees of increasing poverty to a condition in which "there was nothing between the father and mother and hopeless destitution but the genius and industry of the daughter," Bertram House was exchanged for a cottage at Three-Mile-Cross, which, Miss Mitford tells Sir William Elford, consisted of "a series of closets," with a garden about the size of "a good drawing-room," with "a public-house on one side,* a village

* This roadside inn had sometimes interesting visitors. "The Duke of Wellington's sons are at home for the Eton holidays, and they come every day to a little alehouse next door, to take

shop on the other, and a cobbler's stall opposite." It is, she continues:

"an excellent lesson of condensation—one which we all wanted. Great as our merits might be in some points, we none of us excelled in compression. Mamma's tidiness was almost as diffuse as my letters. Papa could never tell a short story, nor could papa's daughter ever write a short letter. I expect we shall be much benefited by this squeeze, though at present it sits upon us as uneasily as tight stays, and is just as awkward-looking. Indeed, my great objection to a small room always was its extreme unbecomingness to one of my enormity. I really seem to fill it—the parlour looks all me."

In this spirit of bright acquiescence in loss and disappointment, resolutely looking only at the humorous side of privation—nursing, amusing, waiting on her invalid mother and her exacting father, and often writing all night to make up for the time bestowed on them during the day—her own health broken by incessant toil—Miss Mitford for thirty years made the rude cottage a true home, visited by legions of friends, including almost every contemporary of literary sympathies and pursuits. Here she found "mere life" a luxury, while she could tame the robins until they answered her call, watch "the cherries ripen and

lessons in French of a Jew, who is lodging there. 'The poor little lads, ma'am,' said my neighbour the landlord, 'are kept very strict; they never look up but their tutor corrects them; and there they sit in my parlour from eleven o'clock till half-past four, and never have a glass of anything!'"—*Miss Mitford.*

the roses blow," tear her gowns searching in the hedgerows for wild flowers, or now and then snatch a holiday, and crouch for a whole bright summer day on some hay carefully left for her under the shade of a willow, with a book on her knee and her hand on the head of a favourite dog.

Rarely, however, did she indulge in such exquisite idleness:

"I am writing for the magazines," she tells Sir William Elford, "poetry, criticism, and dramatic sketches. I work as hard as a lawyer's clerk; and besides the natural loathing of pen and ink which that sort of drudgery cannot fail to inspire, I have really scarcely a moment to spare."

To Haydon, who had been introduced to her by his generous friend, Sir William, and for whose genius, and stormy, loving, high-strung nature, she had the keenest admiration and sympathy, she says:

"I have been very busy—audaciously busy—writing a tragedy. We are poor, you know. When I was in town I saw an indifferent tragedy, of which the indifferent success procured for the author three or four hundred pounds. This raised my emulation. . . . My anxiety on this subject is not vanity. It is not fame or praise I want, but the power of assisting my dearest and kindest father."

In spite of this disclaimer she built some personal hopes on the success of her play:

"I do so love a ride in a pony chaise," she says. "If my *Foscari* were to succeed I should be tempted to keep one myself. You know, of everything that I want or wish I say

'if *Foscari* succeeds.' I said so the other day about a new straw bonnet, and then about a white geranium, and then about a pink sash, and then about a straw workbasket—all in the course of one street."

Foscari was at that time rejected. But the undaunted authoress soon had another tragedy ready for scrutiny, and in 1823 *Julian* was produced at Covent Garden, with Macready as the hero. She was at first more than satisfied with the result, but Macready calls it but a "moderate success," and adds, "the performance made little impression and was soon forgotten." *

Her next venture was launched on less stormy waters. It was the delightful series of sketches called "Our Village," which at once took the reading world by storm—if one may use such an expression of so genial and kindly a book.

"You would be diverted," she tells Sir William Elford, "at some instances of its popularity. Columbines and children have been named after Mayflower. Stage coachmen and post-boys point out the localities ; schoolboys deny the possibility of any woman's having written the cricket match without schoolboy help. And such men as Lord Stowell send to me for a key."

In 1826 *Foscari* was at last produced with really brilliant success. "William Harness and Mr. Talfourd are both quite satisfied with the whole

* "Macready's Reminiscences." Edit. 1876. Macmillan. Page 211.

affair, and my other friends are half crazy," she writes. But her greatest dramatic triumph was *Rienzi.* The play abounded in passages of great poetic beauty, and Young as Rienzi, with Miss Phillips as Claudia, realized Miss Mitford's conceptions. "A magnificent performance throughout," she called it; and the publishers sold eight thousand copies of the play in two months.

Mrs. S. C. Hall, in one of the lively sketches which give value to her husband's "Book of Memories," thus describes Miss Mitford at this time. She was staying with Mrs. Hofland in order to "superintend" the production of her tragedy.

"'Mary,' said her hostess to Mrs. Hall, 'is a little grand and stilted just now. There is no doubt the tragedy will be a great success. Macready told me it was a wonderful tragedy—an extraordinary tragedy "*for a woman to have written.*" The men always make that reservation, my dear. They cramp us, my dear, and then reproach us with our lameness; but Mary did not hear it, and I did not tell her She is supremely happy just now, and so is her father the doctor. Yes, it is no wonder she should be a little stilted—such grand people coming to call and invite them to dinner, and all the folk at the theatre down-upon-knee to her. It is such a contrast to Three-Mile-Cross.' 'But,' I said, 'she deserves all the homage that can be rendered her—her talents are so varied. Those stories of "Our Village" are inimitable as pictures of English rural life; and she has also achieved the highest walk in tragedy.' '*For a woman,*' put in Mrs. Hofland. She had not forgiven our great tragedian for his ungallant reserve. I certainly was disappointed when a stout little lady, tightened up in a shawl, rolled into the

parlour in Newman Street; her short petticoats showing wonderfully strong leather boots, and a little black coalscuttle bonnet adding to the effect of her natural rotundity. But her manner was that of a cordial country gentlewoman. The pressure of her hands was warm; her eyes, both soft and bright, looked kindly and frankly into mine, and her pretty rosy mouth dimpled with sweet and friendly smiles. . . . She was always pleasant to look at, and had her face not been so 'outspread' she would have been handsome; even with that disadvantage, if her figure had been tall enough to carry her head with dignity, she would have been so: but she was most vexatiously 'dumpy.' Miss Landon hit off her appearance when she whispered, the first time she saw her, 'Sancho Panza in petticoats.'" *

Meantime artists were busy—somewhat unsatisfactorily—painting the now famous authoress. Her friend Haydon produced "a Brobdingnagian fat woman seated in a bower of Brobdingnagian honeysuckles," which pleased nobody except possibly himself—since mere bigness seems at times to have gratified him. And then she sat to Mr. Lucas for a portrait, which, strange to say, afforded the original unmixed satisfaction. "It will be a great contrast," she proudly says, "to the cook-maid thing of poor dear Mr. Haydon. . . . I never saw a more ladylike picture. A very fine piece of colour, and they say a very strong likeness." Mrs. Acton Tindal tells a rather different story. No woman, she says—

* "Book of Memories." Virtue, 1871. Page 139.

"was ever less self-conscious than Miss Mitford, or less addicted to small vanities and selfish ambitions. She was curiously, almost unfortunately, ignorant about all matters of dress, and in general perfectly indifferent on the subject. Yet now and then an occasion would arise which she believed required some headdress more elaborate than the simple motherly cap, trimmed with grey or white, in which her friends knew her best. When this sense of social duty oppressed her she found it very difficult to arrive at any successful arrangement. Something would go wrong with the unnatural finery."*

Accordingly she distrusted her unaided judgment, and when about to sit to Mr. Lucas, consulted her friend Lady Madalina Porter (wife of the thin candidate before referred to).

"They laid their heads together on the subject of costume, and instead of wearing her simple cap, and soft lace cape folded over a dark dress, Miss Mitford was induced to accept the loan of a large black velvet hat with a plume of white ostrich feathers, and a gorgeous cloak of gentianella blue, lined with white satin and trimmed with fur. Thus invested, our dear old friend sat to the secretly demurring artist for what proved to be, so far as the head and face were concerned, an excellent likeness, though the plumes and mantle of the Duke's daughter spoilt the picture, so

* Mrs. S. C. Hall describes Miss Mitford's appearance at an evening party, "most unbecomingly dressed in a striped satin something, neither high nor low, with very short sleeves, for her arms were white and finely formed. She wore a large yellow turban, which added considerably to the size of her head. She had evidently bought the hideous thing *en route*, and put it on in the carriage, for pinned at the back was a somewhat large card, on which were written, in somewhat large letters, these astounding words—'Very Chaste. Only Five and Threepence.'"—"Book of Memories," p. 440.

strangely were they out of keeping on the head and shoulders of the careworn literary gentlewoman. The artist fretted over the bad taste of these sumptuous and unnatural accessories, at last cancelled the picture in a fit of desperation, and went down to Three-Mile-Cross to pacify Miss Mitford by painting a portrait of her father for her."

Mrs. Acton Tindal's own hand has left an admirable pen-and-ink portrait of her friend:

"Time touched her very tenderly. The features she called hard and coarse always remained womanly, and early became venerable. Her patiently borne labours and troubles set their seal on her benignant countenance. There was a very pathetic expression about her mouth and in her large, slowly moving, sad grey eyes, though they lighted up now and then with a glancing gleam of the drollest humour. She always looked fully at the person she was addressing for a time, but they had an odd trick of drifting aside, as if she were gazing far beyond the walls that surrounded her. . . . On each side of her massive temples lay short grey curls of silvery brightness and an infantine delicacy of texture."

Once, and once only, do we find Miss Mitford in momentary rebellion against her domestic tyrant. He might waste her money, crush her spirits, occupy her time, and by his ceaseless exactions injure her health, yet she still upheld him as the dearest, grandest, most beautiful of mankind. But he poured scorn on her friends, and her generous spirit was roused. Mr. Harness had asked her intervention on behalf of an actor named Cathcart, for whose talents they both felt great admiration:

"He is a man of genius," she replies, "and worthy in every respect. If he thinks and you think that I can be of service to him I will go to London, and do all I can to forward his wishes. But—to you—I confess that this measure would be attended with great personal difficulty. My father—very kind to me in many respects, very attentive if I'm ill, very solicitous that my garden should be nicely kept, that I should go out with him and be amused—is yet, so far as art, literature, and the drama are concerned, of a temper infinitely difficult to deal with. He hates and despises them and all their professors, and is constantly taunting me with 'my friends' and 'my people,' as he calls them, reproaching me if I hold the slightest intercourse with author, editor, artist, or actor, and treating with frank contempt every one not of a certain status in the county. I am entirely convinced that he would consider Sir Thomas Lawrence, Sir Walter Scott, and Mrs. Siddons his inferiors. Always this is very painful—strangely painful; but sometimes, in the case of the sweet young boy Lucas" (the artist) "and in this of Mr. Cathcart, it becomes really hard to bear. Since I have known Mr. C. I can say with truth that he has never spoken to me or looked at me without ill-humour. . . . Now, he ought to remember that it is from a sense of duty that I have been thrown in the way of these persons, and he should allow for the natural sympathy of similar pursuits, and the natural wish to do the little one can to bring merit into notice. It is one of the few alleviations of a destiny that is wearing down my health and mind and spirits and strength—a life spent in efforts above my powers. He ought to feel this; but he does not. I beg your pardon for vexing you with this detail. . . . But I meant to say that it will be a scene and an effort to get to town for this purpose. *Nevertheless, if you think I can do good I will most assuredly go.*" *

* It is some consolation to remember how Dr. Mitford must have been tormented by the annually increasing tribes of visitors.

Obviously her strength was in every way overtaxed at this time, for she says in writing to Haydon (whose vigorous, eccentric, warm-hearted letters to her may be found in the second volume of the "Correspondence and Table-Talk," edited by his son Frederic):

"I am ashamed to say that a play bespoken last year at Drury Lane, and wanted by them beyond measure, is not yet nearly finished. I try to write it, and cry over my lamentable inability, but I do not get on. Women were not meant to earn the bread of a family—I am sure of that—there is a want of strength. I shall, however, have a volume of 'Country Stories' out in the spring."

On New Year's Day, 1830, Mrs. Mitford died very calmly, after two apoplectic strokes. Her daughter sorely missed, not only her tender affection, but her strong sympathy with all her own struggles and successes.

Friends, old and new, gathered round Miss Mitford, with all the comfort affection could afford, and by degrees she found relief in their society. In May she visited Serjeant Talfourd, to share, as she says, his "agony of glory" during the production of *Ion*. Six months later her own play of *Inez di Castro* was in preparation, with Charles Kemble as Pedro, and Fanny Kemble as Inez.

from the despised and detested "City of Prague," whom his daughter's popularity brought to the cottage.

"Mr. Talfourd, who brought me this news, says that Fanny Kemble's Callista (odious as the part is) displays far higher talent than anything she has yet done, and that at a distance he could have imagined her a smaller and younger Mrs. Siddons. . . . I have never seen her act, but I am well acquainted with her off the stage, and know her to be a girl of great ability. The difference of age makes it singular that she in Paris and I in London were educated by the same lady."

Three years later *Charles the First*, which the Lord Chamberlain had refused to license because of its "dangerous subject," was produced at the Victoria Theatre, which was out of his jurisdiction, with Mr. Cathcart as Cromwell. And in 1835 her opera, *Sadak and Kalascade*, was performed at the Lyceum. In the same year *Belford Regis* appeared, and she was always busy for magazines and annuals.

Still she found time for "the best society." The names of her visitors would furnish a sort of Literary and Artistic Directory of the period; and she not only received them, but remembered them, made their hopes or sorrows hers, advised, comforted, scolded them. And how pleasant it can sometimes be, to feel that one is liked sufficiently to be scolded!

Still she found time not only to cultivate her flowers, but to know them, nurse them, love them individually, as she did her four-footed pets. And

these warm sympathies and wholesome tasks kept her young in spite of heavy cares.

In the following year she records a dinner at Talfourd's, at which she met Wordsworth: "A venerable old man, delightfully mild and placid, and most kind to me;" Landor, "a very striking-looking person, and exceedingly clever;" Proctor and Chorley; and she carelessly mentions "Mr. Browning—a young poet," little thinking how his future life was to influence and be interwoven with that of her most beloved friend, of whom, during the same visit, we have the first glimpse in a letter to Dr. Mitford:

"I told you that Mr. Kenyon was to take me to the Giraffes and the Diorama, with both of which I was delighted. A sweet young woman whom we called for in Gloucester Place went with us—a Miss Barrett, who reads Greek as I do French, and has published some translations from Æschylus, and some most striking poems. She is a delightful young creature, shy and timid and modest. Nothing but her desire to see me got her out at all, but now she is coming to us to-morrow night also."

They met again at a "magnificent" dinner given by Mr. Kenyon, and Miss Mitford tells her father that her new friend is "so sweet and gentle, and so pretty, that one looks at her as if she were some bright flower. And she says it is like a dream that she should be talking to me, whose works she knows by heart."

Another pleasant meeting was with the Duke of Devonshire, "the kindest-natured of the great," who brought her a bouquet of a thousand lilies of the valley, mixed with moss roses, and invited her to Chiswick. The only crumpled leaf amongst those roses was a fancy that Talfourd was *jealous* of her, and a slight astonishment, natural, of course, in the author of *Rienzi*, that he should think so very, very much of *Ion!*

In 1837 Lord Melbourne granted Miss Mitford a pension of £100 a year, relieving her from the haunting terror of absolute want in old age, occasioned by the rapidity with which her little capital was melting away under the incessant demands of her father, whilst his personal exactions broke her health and hindered her literary work.

In December, 1842, Dr. Mitford died. He had been for years in a condition of bodily weakness and mental irritability which taxed his daughter's strength and patience to the utmost.

"From the time of her mother's death," says Chorley, "the weight which Dr. Mitford had divided between two forbearing women had to be borne by one. No one can wonder that the ceaseless and unreasonable claims on her time, and the merciless forestalling of every guinea that could be wrung from her, by one whose selfishness grew as time went on, bore with increasing weight on her health, and on

creative power which required some aliment better than a sense of duty prompted by self-delusion."

Still, he was her one object in life—the only living being to whom she was necessary, however dear she might be to many; the only one for whom she had to work and to hope. And her sense of isolation was overwhelmingly bitter when she had "buried her dead out of her sight."

Her greatest consolation was the affection of Elizabeth Barrett, with whom she had maintained a constant and most interesting correspondence since that first meeting when they went to see "the giraffes." Miss Mitford was proud of her friend's genius when the world had only begun to discern it.

"My love and my ambition for you," she writes, "often seems to be more like that of a mother for a son, or a father for a daughter (the two fondest of natural emotions), than the common bond of even a close friendship between two women of different ages and similar pursuits. . . . My pride and my hopes seem altogether merged in you."

Yet even this sustaining friendship had its painful side. Miss Barrett's always delicate health was subject to fluctuations which caused her friends the keenest anxiety. Once Miss Mitford writes of her not having been dressed for six months—only lifted from her bed to the sofa—

and her voice not raised above a whisper; but predicts:

"If she be spared you will see her passing all women and most men, as a narrative or dramatic poet. After all, she is herself, in her modesty, her sweetness, and her affectionate warmth of heart, by very far more wonderful than her poems, extraordinary as *they* are. . . . An odd effect of absence from general society, that the talent for conversation should have ripened and the shyness disappeared—but so it is. When I first saw her, her talk, delightful as it was, had something too much of the lamp—she spoke too well—and her letters were rather too much like the very best books. Now all that is gone; the fine thoughts come gushing and sparkling like water from a spring, but flow as naturally as water down a hillside, clear, bright, and sparkling in the sunshine. All this, besides its great delightfulness, *looks like life, does it not?*"

That was the burden of all Miss Mitford's references to Elizabeth Barrett at this time, when the fine brain and the great heart seemed so lightly linked to earth by that fragile body. The death of a favourite brother who had given up all other pursuits to share Miss Barrett's enforced residence at Torquay, and who was lost in a sailing-boat which sank almost within sight of her windows, seemed to deprive her of both the power and the desire to live, and for years her intercourse with friends was chiefly by correspondence. Miss Mitford prized her letters exceedingly. "Put Madame de Sevigné and Cowper together, and

you may fancy them," she says; and Chorley, in an editorial note, adds, "Never was eulogy, high strained though it may seem, more justified by facts than this. I speak to it from experience, and cannot but wish that the letters in question should, under due supervision, be published."

Chorley's wish has been to a certain extent fulfilled, though not as regards that particular correspondence. Letters on literary subjects have been published which show how playful and earnest, how thoughtful and sympathetic Elizabeth Barrett could be, even when suffering most from pain and depression, and addressing a friend whom she had at that time never met face to face.* This friend, R. H. Horne, then noticeable and interesting, both from his unquestionable poetic and critical genius and his adventurous life, was introduced by Miss Barrett to Miss Mitford as a contributor to one of the numerous annuals edited by the latter, and became an annual visitor at her cottage, where the poet, with his romantic aspect (his "determined picturesqueness" Miss Martineau called it), sat amidst the roses and geraniums, playing his guitar and singing Spanish ballads to his kindly, "apple-cheeked" hostess and her circle

* "Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Richard Hengist Horne." Edited by S. R. Townshend Mayer. Two vols. Bentley, 1877.

of admiring friends. In one of these—the fair and delicate daughter of a wealthy neighbouring family well known to literature—Miss Mitford (at heart a great match-maker) thought she saw a fitting bride for the poet, rich in everything save worldly goods. But fate said no, and the end of the brief love story was a fine elegy over an early grave.

Another friend in whom Miss Mitford and Miss Barrett were equally interested was poor Haydon, who, in his happier days, used to dart into the garden at Three-Mile-Cross "like embodied sunshine." He was hyper-sensitive in friendship as in everything else, and between him and Miss Mitford a passing cloud arose. But his confidence in Miss Barrett was always unshaken, and on hearing of his terrible end she wrote to Miss Mitford:

"The shock of poor Mr. Haydon's death overcame me for several days. . . . The week preceding the event he wrote several notes to me, and by his desire I have under my care boxes and pictures of his which he brought himself to the door. Never did I imagine it was other than one of the passing embarrassments so unhappily frequent with him. Once before he had asked me to give shelter to things belonging to him, which, when the storm had blown over, he had taken back again. I did not suppose that in this storm he was to sink—poor noble soul!"

Early in 1846 Miss Mitford had startling news to impart to her correspondents:

"My beloved friend Elizabeth Barrett is married! Love really is the wizard the poets have called him; a fact which I have always doubted until now. Never was such a miraculous proof of his power, as her travelling across France by diligence, by railway, by Rhone boat—and having arrived in Pisa so much improved in health that Mrs. Jameson, who travelled with them, says she is 'not merely improved but transformed.' I do not know Mr. Browning, but this fact is enough to make me his friend."

Thenceforward a fresh interest arose for Miss Mitford, in watching the wonderful union of minds and hearts which began in the invalid's darkened room in Wimpole Street, and was completed in the sunshine of Casa Guidi. It pleased her greatly to record, as time went on, that Mrs. Browning was "at the Baths of Lucca, with her very fine healthy child . . . so well that she scrambles up the mountains and loses herself in the chestnut forests;" or that at Venice she and her husband "might be found every evening in St. Mark's Place, drinking coffee and reading the French papers, after which they adjourned to the opera." A magical change, indeed, from those dark suffering hours in London, when she wrote:

> "My future will not copy fair my past
> On any leaf but Heaven's."

It is gratifying to find that Miss Mitford had the happiness of seeing with her own eyes the "transformation" of her dearest friend. In 1881

Mrs. Browning returned to England for a short time, and Miss Mitford says, in one of her interesting letters to Charles Boner—

"Just after I wrote to you Mrs. Browning arrived in town, and I went there for a week to meet her. A strange thing it seemed to see her walking about like other people. She and her husband are now going to winter in Paris. They have a pretty little boy, but it was odd to hear the English parents and the English nurse talking to him in Italian. . . . On their way to England they stopped at Paris, and in the Louvre they thought they saw Alfred Tennyson; looking at the book they found his name written—'A. Tennyson, rentier.' (Is not that curious?) So then they met and offered each other their houses, he having a cottage at Twickenham and they not having given up their apartment at Casa Guidi."*

In Harriet Martineau's "Autobiography" there is a notice of Miss Mitford, tinged with the writer's too frequent bitterness, but not wholly unjust. After contrasting the "graphic descriptions" of "Our Village" with "Mrs. Radcliffe's gorgeous or luscious generalities," and speaking of the gratitude deserved by Miss Austen and Miss Mitford for "rescuing us from the folly and bad taste of slovenly indefiniteness in delineation," she adds—

"I must say that personally I did not like her so well as I liked her works. The charming *bonhomie* of her

* "Memoirs and Letters of Charles Boner." Edited by R. M. Kettle. Bentley & Son, 1871. Vol. i. pp. 186–214.

writings appeared at first in her conversation and manners; but there were other things which presently impaired its charm . . . her habit of flattery, and the twin habit of disparagement of others. I never knew her respond to any act or course of conduct which was morally lofty. She could not believe in it, nor, of course, enjoy it.* She was a devoted daughter, where the duty was none of the easiest, and servants and neighbours were sincerely attached to her. The little intercourse I had with her was spoilt by her habit of flattery, but I always fell back on my admiration of her as soon as she was out of sight, and her 'Village' rose up in my memory." †

Miss Mitford's life, as age and infirmity increased, became even quieter and more home-centred. In 1851 she removed to a cottage at Swallowfield, which she called small and ugly, but comfortable and dry; she soon beautified it with climbing roses, and made a pleasant seat under an acacia tree, "loaded with snowy tassels waving like the green leaves, and wafting their rich perfume with every motion," and beside a syringa bush—"the English orange-tree, so charming in full flower." ‡

* By her own showing Miss Martineau's acquaintance with Miss Mitford was much too slight to justify so sweeping an assertion as this.

† Vol. i. pp. 419, 420.

‡ Mrs. Thackeray Ritchie, in the Introduction to the very charming illustrated edition of "Our Village," published by Macmillan, describes her pilgrimage to Swallowfield, and gives such recollections of Miss Mitford as still linger there. The feeling is intimated rather than expressed, but she evidently regrets that Miss Mitford's regard for her two old servants should have led her to leave them

One of the pleasantest of modern "personal books" contains the following recollections of Swallowfield and its mistress:—

"I seem to see the dear old lady now, looking like a venerable fairy," writes Mr. Payn, "with bright sparkling eyes, a clear incisive voice, and a laugh that carried you away with it. I never saw a woman with such an enjoyment of—I was about to say a joke, but the word is too coarse for her—of a pleasantry. She was the warmest of friends, and with all her love of fun never alluded to their weaknesses. . . . I expected to find the authoress of 'Our Village' in a most picturesque residence, . . . her little cottage at Swallowfield did not answer this picture at all. It was a cottage, but not a pretty one, placed where three roads met, with only a piece of green before it. But if the dwelling disappointed me, the owner did not. I was ushered upstairs (for at that time, crippled by rheumatism, she was unable to leave her room) into a small apartment lined with books from floor to ceiling and fragrant with flowers; its tenant rose from her armchair with difficulty, but with a sunny smile and a charming manner bade me welcome. . . . She talked like an angel, but her views upon poetry, as a calling in life, shocked me not a little. I was in love, of course, and she shocked me even more upon that subject. She said she preferred a marriage *de convenance* to a love match, because it generally turned out better. 'This surprises you,' she said, smiling, 'but, then, I suppose I am the least romantic person that ever wrote plays.'"

She maintained her lively interest in the rising stars of literature, telling Mrs. Browning that a new acquaintance visiting in the neighbourhood—

her valuable library, with the exception of "one book to be given to each of her friends."

"Is intimate with all the Tennysons, and speaks of them more highly than I ever heard any one—perhaps because she knows them better. She says that they are the most unworldly people she ever knew, valuing everybody by their personal qualities, apart from all considerations of rank, or wealth, or fame. Indolence is the besetting sin of the race, but they can work if they will. For instance, she made Alfred dig up the whole garden at her father's country living near Sevenoaks, and he did it capitally."

At Swallowfield Miss Mitford first received another writer, who had long been a friend through his works:

"Mr. Kingsley took me quite by surprise in his extraordinary fascination. I have never seen a man of letters the least like him, for in general the *beau-idéal* of a young poet remains a *beau-idéal*. They are mostly middle-aged, sometimes elderly, conceited, affected, foppish, vulgar. Mr. Kingsley is not only a high-bred gentleman, but has the most charming admixture of softness and gentleness, with spirit, manliness, and frankness, and a cordiality and courtesy that would win any heart. He did win his own sweet wife entirely by this charm of character. She was a girl of family, fortune, fashion, and beauty. He a young curate, without even literary distinction, for he had not then published. He loved her—she loved him, and they lived down and loved down a pretty strong family opposition, and were married. Since then Sir John Cope gave him the living of Eversley, and he has won a very high fame, and the love of all the neighbourhood. He is quite young, and though, I suppose, he does not generally intend to go fox-hunting, yet it sometimes happens that his horse carries him into the midst of the chase, where he is eager and delighted as a boy. I cannot tell you how much I like him."

Mr. Payn quotes part of a letter to him from

Charles Kingsley, giving his impressions of Miss Mitford :—

"I can never forget the little figure rolled up in two chairs in the little Swallowfield room, packed round with books up to the ceiling—the little figure with clothes on of no recognized or recognizable pattern ; and somewhere, out of the upper end of the heap, gleaming under a great deep globular brow, two such eyes as I never perhaps saw in any other Englishwoman—though I believe she must have had French blood in her veins to breed such eyes and such a tongue ; the beautiful speech which came out of that ugly (it was that) face, and the glitter and depth too of the eyes, like live coals—perfectly honest the while. In any case she was a triumph of mind over matter ; of spirit over flesh, which gave the lie to all materialism, and puts Professor Bain out of court—at least out of court with those who use fair induction about the men and women whom they meet and know." *

In December, 1852, Miss Mitford was thrown violently from her little pony-carriage, and besides being severely bruised, sustained injuries to the spine from which she never completely recovered. But she did not repine. She could still be carried to her favourite seat among her flowers, and she continued her literary work, although her pen often had to be dipped in the ink for her by others, and although the pressure of pecuniary necessity had been removed, at the time of Dr. Mitford's death, by a subscription, headed by the Queen, for the

* "Some Literary Recollections." By James Payn. Smith, Elder & Co., 1884. Pages 74–81.

purpose of paying the heavy debts he had incurred, and purchasing a small annuity for his daughter in addition to her pension.

Early in 1854 Miss Mitford completed her novel "Atherton," which she said "twice nearly killed her" (in writing and in reading the proofs), and received a visit from Talfourd. Both felt, she said, that they parted for the last time, "although neither dreamt which strand of the cord was so soon to give way." *

The other frail strand could bear little further strain. After increasing suffering, endured most patiently—retaining to the very last her love of Nature and of books, her sympathetic tenderness for her friends, and her faith in God—Mary Russell Mitford gently passed away.

"And as she lay in her coffin," writes Mr. L'Estrange, "her features—undisturbed by any trace of the cares, the vicissitudes, the illness that she had undergone, still bearing a resemblance to the miniature painted of her in childhood—were overspread by an expression of intense repose, and peace, and charity, such as no living face had ever known."

* Talfourd died in March of that year, while delivering a noble charge to the Grand Jury in the Assize Court, Stafford.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY.

SOUTHEY, making his *début* in London literary society early in 1797, lamented to Joseph Cottle that in the countenance of every "lion" he had met he found some unpleasant trait.

"Mary Imlay's,"* he continues, "is the best, infinitely the best. The only fault in it is an expression indicating superiority; not haughtiness, not sarcasm in Mary Imlay, but still it is unpleasant. Her eyes are light brown, and though the lid of one of them is affected by a little paralysis, they are the most meaning I ever saw. . . . As for Godwin, he has large noble eyes and a *nose*—oh, most abominable nose! Language is not vituperatious enough to describe the effect of its downward elongation. . . . I never see it without longing to cut it off."†

The month in which these candid comments were written saw the marriage of the two famous persons described.‡ William Godwin, the son of a Dissenting minister, was educated for the same

* The name by which Mary Wollstonecraft was then known.

† "Life and Correspondence of Southey," vol. i. p. 305.

‡ According to Mr. Kegan Paul, in his "Life of Godwin," and also in the Memoir of Mary Wollstonecraft prefixed to the "Letters to Imlay."

calling, and followed it for some time at Ware and Stowmarket. But his faith, being always a matter more of the head than the heart, was shaken by a wider acquaintance with controversial literature, and in 1785 he established himself in London as a political writer on the Liberal side, and one of the brilliant group of authors introduced to the public by Murray. Talfourd, in a remarkable analytical sketch of Godwin, after saying that at one time his reputation "filled Europe with its echoes," adds—

"In his mind the faculty of abstract reason so predominated over all others as practically to extinguish them . . . the apparent anomalies of his intellectual history arose from the application of his power to the passions, the interests and the hopes of mankind at a time when they kindled into frightful action, and when he calmly worked out his problems among their burning elements with the ice-brook's temper and the severest logic." *

This philosophic calm was manifested in Godwin's life as consistently as in his writings, until, at the mature age of forty-one, it was disturbed by an influence which he had hitherto held up to contempt as of vastly over-rated power; and, in his own words, "friendship melted into love" for Mary Wollstonecraft.

She resembled Godwin in love of study and in capacity for hard, steady, literary work. In cha-

* "Life and Works of Lamb." Edit. 1865. Page 286.

racter she was his very antipodes. Impulsive, generous, and ardently affectionate, her life had been a series of sacrifices of time, money, and health for her relatives and friends; the last and most fatal being when she gave her heart to Gilbert Imlay. He was an American; resident, like herself, in Paris, during the First French Revolution. Although any religious or legal ceremony would have involved both of them in some risk, as Mary must have declared that she was a British subject,

"She considered herself," says Mr. Kegan Paul, "in the eyes of God and man, his wife. Religious as she was, and with a strong moral sense, she yet made the grand mistake of supposing that it was possible for a woman to undo the consecrated custom of ages, to set herself in opposition to the course of society and not be crushed by it."*

She was soon and bitterly undeceived. In May, 1795, Imlay executed a legal document empowering "Mary Imlay, my best friend and wife," to arrange some difficult business for him in Sweden and Norway; when she rejoined him in England in the autumn, her arduous and somewhat perilous task accomplished, he proposed separation, and offered her an annuity which she indignantly refused. In her first despair she attempted to drown herself. After a time she resumed her studious

* "William Godwin; his Friends and Contemporaries," vol. i. p. 215.

habits, and was supporting her little daughter Fanny by literary work, when Godwin became acquainted with her. They were married, as we have seen, in 1797. On August 30 a daughter was born, and two days later Mrs. Godwin expired.

The tenor of their brief union may best be judged by this passage from a letter in which Godwin told Holcroft of his loss:

"I firmly believe that there does not exist her equal in this world. I know from experience we were formed to make each other happy. I have not the least expectation that I can ever know happiness again."

Godwin was seen at his best in the unwonted warmth and humility of his appreciation of his wife, his genuine grief on losing her, and his tender anxiety for the two little half-sisters left in his charge. "I am the most unfit person for this office; she was the best qualified in the world," he wrote. The affectionate and playful messages he sent to the children during brief absences from London after their mother's death show that where they were concerned the "great head of cold brains" was overruled by the heart; and their future lives might have taken a different course had not Godwin, a little later, fallen under the narrowing influence of a jealous and selfish woman.

It was a growing sense of his own inability to ensure the children's welfare, combined, it is alleged, with a display of unsolicited affection on the part of his housekeeper, which hurried Godwin into the almost comic attempts to effect a second marriage so fully detailed in Mr. Kegan Paul's Memoir.

The first lady he addressed was Harriett Lee, joint author with her sister of the "Canterbury Tales" and other forgotten fictions. Godwin met her four times at Bath, where she and her sisters kept a ladies' school, and on his return to London opened a correspondence, or rather a controversy, in which, as a disinterested friend, "he tried to argue the lady into matrimony." The marginal comments made by Miss Lee on Godwin's surprising effusions are worthy of a *précieuse*. "His title to be received as an acquaintance," she decides, "has been lost by his forwardness to employ the privileges and claim the rights of a more endeared relation."

A strong contrast to the prim Somersetshire governess was Mrs. Reveley, with whom Godwin next tried his fortune. Brought up in Constantinople from the age of eight, she went to Rome at fifteen to study under Angelica Kauffman, and almost immediately married a young architect, with whom she returned to England. Her beauty

and talent, independence of mind, springing from her varied experiences, and gentleness of disposition, charmed Godwin, who became her intimate friend. Mr. Reveley died with appalling suddenness, and before a month had elapsed Godwin made it very plain to the young widow, still distracted with grief, that he aspired to fill his friend's place; and he was astonished and even indignant that she would not at once accept in him what, with a slight confusion of metaphors, he called a protector, a harbour and an amulet.*

"There is luck" (whether good or ill is not specified) "in odd numbers." Godwin's third overture was more favourably received. This time, indeed, the lady may be said to have taken the initiative. Godwin was not precisely an ideal Romeo, nor could Mrs. Clairmont have been in any sense a fair representative of Juliet. Yet it was from a balcony that she made her first attack on his heart. In 1801 they occupied adjoining houses in the Polygon, Somers Town. Mrs. Clairmont, who had for some time vainly endeavoured to attract her neighbour's attention, at last played a bold stroke. Entering her balcony one May evening when the philosopher was seated in his

* "William Godwin; his Friends and Contemporaries." By C. Kegan Paul. Vol. i. p. 335.

own, she exclaimed—"Is it possible that I behold the immortal Godwin?" Before the end of the year they were married.*

The new Mrs. Godwin, a woman of a somewhat coarse and commonplace order of talent and good looks, active and not unkindly, but pre-eminently unsuited to control and direct sensitive and romantic temperaments, had, by her first marriage, a son Charles and a daughter Jane, who afterwards called herself Clare. The family circle was completed by William Godwin, born in 1803. The children were from infancy steeped in an atmosphere of restless mental activity, which left no belief unchallenged, and was apt to confuse liberty with licence. Nearly all the men and women prominent in politics or literature, who would now be called "philosophical Radicals," consulted Godwin as an oracle, and made frequent pilgrimages to his shrine, generally extending their interest to the little ones within its homely and meagre limits. So early as 1800 we find Coleridge writing to Godwin:—"Hartley sends his love to Mary. 'What? and not to Fanny?' 'Yes, and to Fanny. But I'll *have* Mary.'"† And in Mrs.

* "William Godwin; his Friends and Contemporaries," vol. ii. p. 58.

† Ibid., vol. ii. p. 3.

Rossetti's Life of Mrs. Shelley* she describes Mary and Fanny hiding under a sofa to hear Coleridge recite his "Ancient Mariner." Mrs. Godwin would have banished the little rebels to bed, but the poet interceded, and they were left to their fearful joy.

Very different associations clustered round the name of Lamb, also a frequent visitor. According to the same biographer, Mary could remember his once going in first to supper at Godwin's house, blowing out the candles, placing a leg of mutton in his friend Martin Burney's hand, and crying reproachfully, when the others entered with lights, "Oh, Martin, Martin! I should never have thought it of you!"

The girls' characters developed rapidly in this stimulating environment. Jane Clairmont, variously described as the eldest and youngest of the three—Mr. Kegan Paul calls her a little older than Fanny, and Mrs. Marshall a little younger than Mary, while Mrs. Rossetti says she was "of age" before Mary was seventeen—was bright, excitable, and impetuous, with her mother's exacting temper, and a most trying propensity to fall into hysterics whenever she was thwarted. Fanny was the peacemaker, acceptable to Mrs. Clairmont for her

* "Eminent Women" series.

domestic usefulness, and to Godwin for her gentle, submissive disposition. Mary was at once ambitious and dreamy, affectionate and reserved. When she was about fifteen, Godwin thus describes "the daughters of Mary Wollstonecraft":—

"Fanny, the elder, is of a quiet, modest, unshowy disposition, somewhat given to indolence, which is her greatest fault, but sober, observing, peculiarly clear and distinct in the faculty of memory, and disposed to exercise her own thoughts and follow her own judgment. Mary, my daughter, is the reverse of her in many particulars. She is singularly bold, somewhat imperious, and active of mind. Her desire of knowledge is great, and her perseverance in everything she undertakes almost invincible. My own daughter is, I believe, very pretty. Fanny is by no means handsome; but in general prepossessing." *

Mary had also an intense capacity for loving, which her father was not likely to discover—and a passion for mental cultivation, which he might have been expected to encourage. But he was divided between abstract speculations and very concrete financial difficulties, and while the girls had, in an intermittent way, such instruction from governesses and schools as was then obtainable, the guiding influence of Mary's mind and character was at that time chiefly derived from long musings in St. Pancras churchyard, where her mother was buried, over that mother's impassioned writings,

* "Life of Godwin," by Kegan Paul. Vol. ii. p. 214.

and the sad story of her enthusiastic, disappointed life, cut short in its brief period of peace.

Mrs. Godwin, who had a large belief in her own business capacity, persuaded her husband to embark in publishing—first under the name of his foreman Baldwin, afterwards in Skinner Street as "M. J. Godwin & Co." They both worked hard to advance the business, but it was always precarious, and occasioned heavy and frequent demands on the liberality of friends to avert a total collapse.

Much of Mary's childhood was spent in the country, and she also paid a long visit to Scotland. One of her biographers (L. M. Rossetti) quotes an Edinburgh bookseller, named Miller, who accompanied Mary and her friends to the Highlands, and said that at first sight of the mountains and cascades she fell on her knees and thanked Heaven for being allowed to behold so much beauty.

On Mary's return to Skinner Street in March, 1814, she found that an important addition had been made to her father's long list of constant visitors. It was Percy Bysshe Shelley.

The son of a Sussex gentleman of old family and good position, he had been expelled from Oxford and forbidden to enter his father's house for publishing a pamphlet called "The Necessity

of Atheism." During his banishment he had further enraged Mr. Timothy Shelley, a typical country squire of the period, by, when only nineteen, making a runaway match with the daughter of an ex-hotel keeper (Hogg says of Jewish extraction) named Westbrook—partly influenced by admiration for her lovely face and gratitude for her avowed preference, but chiefly in order to deliver the girl of sixteen from the "tyranny" of her boarding school.

There had been for some time an active correspondence between the authors of "Queen Mab" and of "Political Justice." Godwin, as Mr. Kegan Paul observes, had a great attraction for persons much younger than himself. "To him, as to a confessor, young men brought their difficulties, intellectual and social, and confided to him their sorrows and their sins, with their aspirations after a higher life." No wonder that Shelley, constantly seeking sympathy, and like all idealists, constantly disappointed, should have turned for counsel to the sage and prophet, whose vision of human progress and perfectibility seemed so congenial with his own. Once Shelley visited Skinner Street accompanied by his wife Harriet—whose radiant, girlish beauty, golden curls, good temper, and gay satin dress, made a strong impression on Godwin's family.

Two years had elapsed since this first meeting, changing Mary from an unformed child to a graceful and thoughtful girl, with fair hair, eyes soft and clear, of a variable shade of brownish grey, a transparent complexion, untinged by colour, and a voice of exquisite sweetness. In Shelley she found everything to captivate her imagination. He, who exercised nothing short of fascination over men so diametrically opposed in tastes and habits as Byron, Hogg, Leigh Hunt, Trelawny, Medwin, and Peacock, might well take by storm the fancy of the enthusiastic day-dreamer, already impressed by his genius, his romantic history, his devotion to the cause of liberty and humanity.

Shelley's wonderful charm of manner and appearance (Mulready is said to have pronounced him "too beautiful to paint"), his high-bred refinement, his vivid imagination and irresistible eagerness of conviction, must have made him seem a being of another sphere among the *habitués* of Skinner Street. And when we add gratitude for the substantial help he was giving her father, and pity, as he began to confide to her the disappointments of the home in which he found or fancied suspicion, alienation, and even disloyalty, the natural result of these emotions was love—love which became the master passion of her life, when

Shelley's eloquent pleading persuaded her that she alone could inspire and console him, she alone could make him the champion of truth and justice which Nature had intended that he should become.

It is little to the purpose to ask how far Shelley's representations were well-founded. He believed in himself, and Mary believed in him. To both of them, in their ardent youth, what they believed, *was*—and if their beliefs changed, why, facts must bow.

They met continually, in Godwin's house and by Mary Wollstonecraft's grave; and at this sombre trysting-place, four months after her return from Scotland, Mary consented to fly with Shelley from the sordid vexations of both their homes to some visionary El Dorado, rich not in gold and gems, but in changeless love and boundless charity.

It must be remembered that the step so hurriedly decided on never presented itself to either of them as a moral problem. They held with Tennyson—giving the maxim a directly opposite application, however—

"We needs must love the highest when we see it,"

and thought themselves not only entitled but obliged to sever all ties which proved unworthy, and to regard legal restrictions as not merely invalid, but "immoral." It was the doctrine of

their school, though Mary might have remembered that her mother, her father, and Shelley himself had found it expedient to submit to such bonds.

The broad outline of Mary's history from this point has long been well-known. More recently, details have been furnished in Mrs. Marshall's fascinating "Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley" which complete the picture. And what a picture it is! Infinitely pathetic in the youth and loneliness of the hero and heroine, their anxious desire to "do right," their absolute incomprehension of responsibility. Solitary amongst uncongenial relations, with many unwise counsellors and undiscriminating admirers, they do not appear to have had one friend who could point them to a higher duty than self-culture, a more binding law than human love. Tragic in some of its consequences, their story has an irresistibly humorous side in its mixture of wild romance and prosaic circumstance, of lofty aspiration and ignoble impediment.

And they were such children! Mary was little more than a child in years and ignorance of the world, and Shelley, despite the experiences so early heaped on his enthusiastic head, was to the last the "eternal child" of poetry.

We see them in the joint diary from which

Professor Dowden and Mrs. Marshall have made such copious extracts,* leaving London on July 28, 1814—"the hottest day that had been known for years." At Dartford they took four horses "that they might outstrip pursuit," and at Dover they hired a small sailing boat rather than wait for the packet. At nightfall a thunderstorm gathered and broke, and they drove before a violent gale to Calais.

"I had time to reflect," writes Shelley, "and even to reason upon death. It was rather a thing of discomfort and disappointment than horror to me. . . . I hope, but my hopes are not unmixed with fear, for what may befall this inestimable spirit when we appear to die."

It was strange that at the outset of their union they should have been threatened with the very doom which ultimately dissolved it.

The inevitable note of comedy follows:

"In the evening," Shelley continues, "Captain Davidson came, and told us that a *fat lady* had arrived who said that I had run away with her daughter. It was Mrs. Godwin." †

* Part of which was published anonymously as the "Journal of a Six Weeks' Tour."

† Mrs. Marshall expresses surprise that the shrewd and suspicious Mrs. Godwin should not have earlier called her husband's attention to the attachment between Mary and Shelley. She has herself made the reason very plain. "The heir to a baronetcy and £6000 a year," the friend who was trying to raise £3000 for Godwin, could not be lightly quarrelled with! She probably shut

And it was *her* daughter she was in search of—not Mary. Jane Clairmont, who had been the confidante, became the companion of the fugitives, and now refused to exchange romance and a continental tour for commonplace and Skinner Street.

Mrs. Godwin returned to London, as she had left it—alone; awake at last to some of the ill effects of her *régime*. The three she left behind proceeded to walk through France, having bought an ass to carry their luggage, which was so weak that it had itself to be carried in the fiacre engaged for the first stage of their journey! No abstract can fairly represent the quaintness and simplicity of the extraordinary journal, begun with the writers' flight, and continued with few intervals until Shelley's death. Through all its early pages they are children, playing at "being grown-up," and defying the world, and sacrificing everything to a grand passion. It is impossible not to pity and equally impossible not to smile at them. And sometimes they laugh at themselves.*

her eyes to all she did not wish to see; and her great jealousy of Mary would not induce her to open them.

* When, for instance, after a highly sensational account of one of Jane Clairmont's hysteric seizures, during which she asserted that her pillow had been removed to a chair at some distance, "evidently by no human hand," the journal dryly records: "Jane walks in her sleep and groans horribly. . . . Next morning the chimney-board in Jane's room is found to have walked leisurely

After a brief visit to Switzerland, want of money drove them back to England, where it was equally hard to obtain, as Shelley had directed his bankers to honour Harriet's demands so far as his account permitted, pending the execution of a deed providing for her separate maintenance. She had availed herself so freely of this arrangement that no balance remained, and Shelley had to apply to her for money!

A state of things followed which Mrs. Marshall calls "incomprehensible"—she might have added, and revolting. Shelley called on Harriet frequently, finding her "sometimes civil and good-tempered, sometimes cross and provoking." Never (if his interpretation of her moods is correct) in the distress and indignation one would have supposed natural—and always running up accounts which he was required to pay. This looks as though she were indeed, on the most charitable construction, only the "fine animal" Shelley once called her; but does not in the least, however loudly his worshippers may assert the contrary, justify him in repudiating all but a monetary responsibility to her and their children.

into the middle of the room, accompanied by the pillow, who, being very sleepy, tried to get into bed again, but sat down on his back.'' —"Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley," by Mrs. Julian Marshall. Richard Bentley & Son. Vol. i. p. 94.

The Godwins, stung by atrocious rumours to which the triple elopement had given rise, made a great show of virtuous resentment when the fugitives returned—but relied on them alone to find means for staving off the bankruptcy which seemed always imminent.

The vivid and uncurbed imaginations of Shelley and Mary, exaggerating the position of hostility to society in which they had placed themselves, saw conspiracies, treachery, or persecution in expressions of unfavourable opinion or demands for the settlement of accounts. A dream became "an appalling vision"—a nervous attack was "a fearful convulsion."

Poor Fanny was the medium of communication, constantly applying to Shelley and Mary to make large advances to the parents who would not receive them; but forbidden to go down to dinner on the day when it was discovered that Mary had sent her a lock of hair!

"Study Greek," says the Diary at this period. "Sail little boats." "Arrange Peacock's marriage." "People call. I suppose bailiffs." "After dinner talk and let off fireworks." "People want their money; won't send up dinner, and we are all very hungry. . . . Shelley goes to Peacock's and comes home with cakes." "Meet a money-lender of

whom I have some hopes." "Sail fire-boats." And then a crisis arrives, and Shelley and Mary must part for a time, as he has to hide from his creditors, and she writes him pathetic letters, deploring his absence, and making appointments to meet him outside coffee-houses, or go into St. Paul's "to talk."

Through all these worries and excitements, Mary, then little more than seventeen, was steadily and systematically educating herself; learning three or four languages, reading diligently history, biography, travels, poetry. Relaxing these studies occasionally, to net Peacock a purse, or "cut out a dress" for herself.

In January, 1815, Shelley made an arrangement with his father by which he relinquished all claim to a portion of the family property, receiving in return a thousand a year, of which he set apart two hundred a year for Harriet; and a sum of money for immediate liabilities, of which he sent her two hundred pounds.

An even greater relief to Mary than this settlement of their financial troubles was the departure of Jane (now usually called Clare) to country lodgings. Her excitable, uncertain temper, her nervous fancies, and the fits of hysteria which Mary and Shelley were called up at night to soothe, made

intolerable demands on their patience. A year of comparative tranquillity followed. Then began direct retribution for one of Shelley's worst errors in judgment and feeling. At Calais, when Mrs. Godwin besought her daughter to return, she had wavered, then consented, and bade Shelley and Mary good-bye; urged by Shelley to take more time for decision, she elected to remain; and although a partial reconciliation with the Godwins took place after she came back to England, her home was thenceforward with Shelley and Mary, who had to suffer severely on her account.

"There is a radical difference," said Mr. Kegan Paul, "between the life of one who honestly believed, on moral grounds, that true marriage can dispense with outward forms and is an union of the heart and mind, and one who necessarily and avowedly was only the object and ministress of a fleeting passion of the basest sort." This distinction, drawn by the writer between Mary Wollstonecraft and Mrs. Robinson, applies with equal force to Mary Godwin and Jane Clairmont. But it is one that can only be proved by results, and it is not to be wondered at that contemporary opinion included both in one condemnation.

Early in 1816, when Shelley was living near Windsor, Miss Clairmont, who had wearied of her

Devonshire seclusion, went to London and applied to Lord Byron for an engagement at Drury Lane Theatre. She did not obtain it, but formed an intimacy with him, the nature of which, says Mrs. Marshall, "she had a positive horror and dread" lest Mary and Shelley should discover. But she introduced Byron to them, and, in the hope of meeting him at Geneva, persuaded them to take her with them when they went to Switzerland for the second time.

There, under the stimulating influence of constant association with Byron and Shelley, amidst the magnificent scenery round Chamounix, Mary began her weird and powerful story "Frankenstein," the most remarkable book ever written by a girl of her age, and the only novel of hers original and striking enough to inspire and retain interest apart from the personality of the author.

When the Shelleys returned to England in the autumn of 1816, Clare continued to be a member of their household; a perpetual source of anxiety and disturbance, though Mary extended unfailing sympathy and patience to her, and Shelley avowed that "he liked her, even when she teased him." They were all living quietly at Bath when dreadful tidings reached them. Poor Fanny, the one unselfish, long-suffering member of the distracted

Godwin household, had broken down under the strain of conflicting affections and the constant pressure of pecuniary troubles. She had been compelled to listen to bitter reproaches and cruel slanders heaped on those she loved best; to bear Godwin's gloom and his wife's irritability; to be made the channel of incessant applications to Shelley and Mary for money, whilst debarred from friendly intercourse with them. And when her aunt Everina Wollstonecraft, with whom there had been some idea of placing her, declined to receive her, and she learnt that she had no legal place in the family or claim on the protection of Godwin, whom she had always loved and regarded as her father, she could bear no more.

Fanny had inherited the deep melancholy of the Wollstonecraft temperament—its warm affections, and its keen sensitiveness to every form of injustice. She found herself alone in the world, a burden on those who could ill provide for their own wants. She fled from home, stayed for a night at an inn at Swansea, and took laudanum, leaving behind a fragment of a letter which showed that the overdose was not accidental.

Her death was a terrible shock to Mary and Shelley; and a tragedy which affected them yet more closely speedily followed.

Shelley had for some time lost sight of Harriet, and in November he wrote to friends with whom she had communicated during the summer on money matters, to ask if anything were known of her. No reply was received until December, when Shelley was told that her body had been found in the Serpentine. There seems little doubt that she had fallen from depth to depth of degradation after Shelley left her, and that her father and sister had treated her harshly when she attempted to return to them. It is difficult justly to apportion the responsibility for her fate, but the sorrow it caused Shelley to the end of his own life could not have been unmixed with self-reproach.

At the end of the month Shelley took Mary to London, where they were married, at St. Mildred's, Broad Street, in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Godwin. On this return to town Mary saw her father for the first time since her flight from home two years and a half before. Mary's comment on the event clearly proves, if other evidence were wanting, the falsehood of Mrs. Godwin's assertion that Fanny killed herself from love for Shelley: "Poor, dear Fanny!" her sister wrote, "if she had lived until this moment she might have been saved, for my house would then have been a proper asylum for her."

To Clare, Mary's house was always an asylum; and there, in the following January, Byron's daughter Allegra was born. The same year saw the termination of the long Chancery suit between the Westbrooks and Shelley for the custody of Harriet's two children, Ianthe and Charles, when Lord Eldon decided against Shelley, who had to allow £200 a year for their maintenance apart from him.

An interval of domestic peace was enjoyed at Marlow, where Shelley's charity and hospitality were almost boundless, and where Mary had the happiness of welcoming her father and brother, and forming a lifelong friendship with the Leigh Hunts, "whose genial social circle," writes Mrs. Marshall, "was most refreshing to her." But scandalous reports, excited by the mystery surrounding the parentage of Allegra, soon disturbed this calm. Again and again Shelley wrote to Byron:

"Pointing out with great gentleness and delicacy, but still in the plainest terms, the false situation in which they were placed with regard to friends, and even to servants, by their effort to keep Clare's secret; suggesting, almost entreating, that some temporary arrangement should at least be made for Alba's (as Allegra was then called) boarding elsewhere. Byron, plunged in dissipation in Venice, avoided the subject as long as he could. Clare was friendless and penniless, and her chances of ever earning an honest living depended on her power of preserving her character before the world."*

* "Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley," vol. i. p. 194.

At last Shelley wrung from Byron a reluctant promise to provide for his child, on condition that she grew up in total ignorance of her mother, who was never to see or communicate with her again. Partly in order to place Allegra in her father's hands, partly on account of Shelley's weak health and desire for a warmer climate, the Shelleys decided to go to Italy, where they arrived with Clare in April, 1818, remaining at Milan whilst a Swiss nurse, who had been for some time in their family, took Allegra to her father at Venice.

The residence in Italy which followed was restless and chequered. The Shelleys seldom remained long in one place, and although they formed friendships and interests wherever they sojourned, especially with the Gisbornes (Godwin's old friend Mrs. Reveley and her second husband), the Hoppners, and Miss Curran, the artist, daughter of the famous orator, Mary's letters express a melancholy which seems prophetic.

The Italy she loved so much became a land of sorrows and of graves to her. First she lost her little Clara ; then, lingering too long in Rome in early summer, William, "whose beauty, promise, and angelic sweetness made him the darling of all who knew him," died of malarial fever.

The grief of the parents was overwhelming.

And though Mary tried to bear her loss with, at least, the outward calm Godwin urged upon her, she wrote to Mrs. Leigh Hunt: "I am never in good spirits — often in very bad: and Hunt's portrait has already seen me shed so many tears that, if it had his heart as well as his eyes, it would weep too, in pity." A few months later some consolation came with the birth of a second son, Percy Florence.

During their sojourn at Pisa, in 1820–21, the Shelleys made some interesting acquaintances: the young Greek patriot Prince Mavrocordato, to whom Shelley dedicated "Hellas," the beautiful Italian girl, Emilia Viviani, the heroine of "Epipsychidion," whose seclusion in a convent aroused Shelley's ardent sympathy (although, as she seems freely to have corresponded with and received visits from English as well as Italian friends, its discipline does not appear to have been very severe) the improvisatore Sgricci, and a very singular personage named Pacchiani.

For some time after leaving England in 1818, Mrs. Shelley wrote more fully to Leigh Hunt and his wife than to any other correspondent: "You are the only people," she says, writing on November 25th, 1819, "from whom we receive any letters except concerning business," — and the

following hitherto unpublished portions of this correspondence * are of great interest. They contain Mrs. Shelley's first impressions of this remarkable group. The nameless Pisan professor can unquestionably be identified with Pacchiani, notwithstanding the high praise here bestowed on "the only Italian who has heart and soul."

The Shelleys, it is well known, like most highly imaginative people, idealized their friends, and in course of time were usually more or less disappointed by the reality. Hogg, Peacock, Emilia Viviani herself,† formed no exceptions to the rule, and in Pacchiani's case the revulsion of feeling was much greater. Medwin tells us that according to Shelley every town or city had its own devil or *diabolessa*; and that "the term *seccatura*, or drying up of all one's faculties, mental and bodily, offers an idea of the effects they produce." ‡ He goes on with apparent gravity to describe Pacchiani as "the devil of Pisa," where he was known as *Il Signore Professore*, though, like many of his

* From a portion of the Leigh Hunt manuscripts placed in the hands of Mr. Townshend Mayer.

† "The 'Epipsychidion' I cannot look at. The person whom it celebrates was a cloud instead of a Juno."—"Shelley's Last Days," by Richard Garnett. *Fortnightly Review*, June, 1878.

‡ It is amusing to find Mrs. Shelley, in a letter published by Mr. Buxton Forman (*Gentleman's Magazine*, No. 1789), applying this uncomplimentary phrase to Medwin himself. "In plain Italian," she says, "he is a *seccatura*."

brethren, he had "made a sinecure of his office (that of *Belles-lettres*) and only mounted the cathedra once." He owed his place in society to the general dread of his bitter pen and tongue, obtained the *entrée* to any house he pleased by his wonderful conversational talent, and kept his footing by making himself "generally useful."

He was, says Medwin, "a *Mezzano*, *Cicerone*, *Conosciatore*, *Dilettante*, and, I might add, *Ruffiano*." In person he was tall and bony, with strongly marked features and gloomy black eyes. He was perpetually quoting what Madame de Staël used to call his *imaginary* tragedies, as not a line of them was ever published. He is credited, however, with vast memory, profound erudition, and sparkling wit; and Shelley is said to have compared his eloquence to that of Coleridge—"a swarm of ideas in a torrent of words." It was this gift, says Medwin, "that made him for a time welcome at Shelley's, where he passed many an evening in the week. I think I see him now, dissecting the snipes with his long, bony, snuffy fingers—he never used a knife or fork." *

Pacchiani was in the Catholic Church, and con-

* "Life of Shelley," vol. ii. Medwin also says that Mrs. Shelley drew Pacchiani "to the life" in her "Valperga,"—probably as Benedetto Pepi—whom she describes as "half a buffoon and half a madman."

fessor to the family of Emilia Viviani; he took Shelley and Medwin to the convent where the Contessina was immured, and where Shelley and Mary Shelley used afterwards frequently to visit her. "She was lovely," says Medwin—her profuse black hair was tied in a simple knot like the Greek Muse in the Florentine Gallery, and displayed a forehead white as marble. Her features were Grecian in contour, her eyes changed from dark to light with her changing feelings.

It was Pacchiani also, if Medwin's somewhat florid narrative may be trusted, who, some years after Emilia's marriage and Shelley's death, accosted Medwin in Florence, and asking him somewhat mysteriously if he would like to see an old friend, took him to a dilapidated Florentine mansion, where Emilia, separated from her husband, was dying of consumption.

Before giving Mrs. Shelley's letters, it should be noted that her handwriting is peculiar, irregular, and not always very legible,* and most of her letters to the Hunts seem to have been written in haste. The earlier of the two which follow is in

* "I wonder what makes Mary think her letter worth the trouble of opening," Shelley asks Mrs. Gisborne; "except, indeed, she conceives it to be a delight to decipher a difficult scrawl. She might as well have put, as I will—"My dear sir—? ? ? ! ! ! Yours, &c."—"Shelley Memorials," edited by Lady Shelley, p. 141.

Italian, in some passages rather obscure. A translation is given here.

"Pisa, December 3rd, 1820.

"Do you believe, my dear friend, that it is very agreeable to us to write thousands upon thousands of letters, and to receive no reply? Why so cruel? In truth, I cannot count the days, the long weeks and still longer months, which have passed without bringing us letters. Marianne and you are equally faithless. Who knows what may have happened to you both?

"Perhaps a Lapland sorceress has transported you, not to the sweet airs and lovely scenes of the South, but to some bleak, dismal, inbound land, which has frozen all your love for us.

"However that may be, I certainly think that you in England are more hard and severe than we, when I see how few of your nobility defend the unfortunate Queen, whom I believe to be perfectly innocent. I feel much pity for that lady; and when one reflects on the great difference between the villainous King and that good, compassionate lady who goes to visit her servant when ill with the plague, one is furious—he, whose character you have yourself depicted as most wicked; and she, whose greatest fault is that she amused herself with her domestics, instead of remaining in utter solitude when the slavish English nobles had entirely abandoned her. It is well known that it was the spies who excited the sentiment against her which exists in Italy. But notwithstanding that strong feeling, all the Italians say that the evidence was certainly not sufficient to condemn her—and indeed I think they have a much more favourable opinion of her since the trial than before. Every one is horrified at the indecency of this infamous case.*

* It is curious to compare this passage with Shelley's disgust at the "mountains of cant . . . about this vulgar cookmaid they call a queen," in Mr. Garnett's article before quoted; and the letter to

"Whilst writing this we have received a letter from dear Marianne, who tells us that you too had written. But that much-wished-for letter has not yet arrived.

"I must tell you, my dear friend, of an acquaintance we have made—a professor at Pisa. He is really the only Italian who has heart and soul. He has high spirit, great genius, and an eloquence that carries one away. The poor Pisans think him mad, and tell so many stories of him that they force one to believe he is at all events rather odd—or, to use an English expression, *eccentric*. He said to me—'They think me mad, and it pleases me that they should so deceive themselves; but perhaps the time may come when they will see that it is the madness of Brutus.' He comes to our house every evening, and always delights us with some original ideas. He speaks beautiful Italian, so different from the idiom of to-day that one might fancy oneself listening to Boccaccio or Macchiavelli speaking as they wrote.

"Then we have become acquainted with an *improvvisatore* —a man of great talent, much knowledge of Greek, and incomparable poetic genius. He improvises with wonderful passion and correctness. His subject was the future destiny of Italy. He recalled how Petrarch had said that neither the lofty Alps nor the sea could defend this decayed and vacillating country from its foreign masters. 'But,' he said, 'I see the Alps grow higher, and the waves mount up in wrath, to hinder the approach of their enemies.' Unfortunately, he, like certain poets in our own country, takes more

Peacock ("Works of Thomas Love Peacock," vol. iii. p. 469) in which he says, "Nothing, I think, shows the generous gullibility of the English nation more than their having adopted her Sacred Majesty as the heroine of the day." Mrs. Shelley's remark about the state of feeling in Italy with regard to the trial is, however, fully supported by Byron. "Nobody here believes a word of the evidence against the Queen," he writes to Murray from Ravenna. "The very mob cry shame against their countrymen."—"Moore's Life of Byron," 3rd edition, vol. iii. p. 23.

pleasure in the momentary plaudits of a theatre, and in being fêted by the ladies, than in studying for posterity.

"You see that as day by day we become acquainted with a few more Italians, we take a greater interest in the threatened war at Naples. What will they do? The Neapolitan nobles are brave and independent, but the populace are slaves. Who can tell whether the troops would resist the Austrians? Every Italian sighs for liberty, but here as in all countries the poor have no power and the rich are not inclined to risk their money. The Italians love money even more than the English. The wealthy English love gold, but the Italian nobles are enamoured of copper and glitter . . . their half-farthings receive as much respect from them as shillings do from us.

"There is another acquaintance of ours, romantic and pathetic—a girl of nineteen, the daughter of a Florentine noble. She is beautiful and clever, and she writes Italian with an elegance and refinement equalling the best writers of Italy's best period. But she is most unhappy. Her mother is one of the worst of women, and being jealous of the beauty and ability of her daughter, she shuts her up in a convent, where she only sees waiting-maids and fools. Confined to two little rooms looking only on the very unpicturesque kitchen-garden of the convent, she unceasingly laments her hard fate. Her only hope is in marriage. But her very existence is almost a secret—so how can she be married? I will tell you, my friend, how marriages are made in this country. And I can vouch for the truth of what I say, because at this very moment, while writing to you, I have before my eyes a proposal for a Pisan girl. The lawyer who was employed to draw it up begins his document thus : . . ."

Then follows a rather tedious transcript of a formal proposal of marriage, in which the intending bridegroom's appearance, habits, education and

prospects are fully described, but nothing is asked about the young lady except her age and the amount of her dowry. "Such is an Italian betrothal!" exclaims Mrs. Shelley. Adding that although tyrants as regards the marriage of their children, Italian parents are kind and indulgent *nei affari communi di giorno in giorno.*

"Up to this time we have had no winter. We are enjoying soft airs and bright sunshine in December. The autumn rains are over, and the country, though stripped and bare, laughs beneath a radiant sky. Do you, oh, my friend, leave all your woes, and for a few moments enjoy also my beautiful Italy. I hope this letter may have that effect. God keep you, and all those who belong to you. Shelley and Clare send thousands on thousands of affectionate greetings. Farewell.

"Your constant friend,

"MARINA."

The *improvvisatore* mentioned as a new acquaintance in this letter, and more fully described in the one which follows, was Sgricci, who, according to Medwin, impressed Byron almost as much as he did the Shelleys. Mrs. Jameson, in her "Diary of an Ennuyée," says Sgricci's genius was considered "almost supernatural." Medwin tells us that he died young, having obtained a pension from government, which "extinguished his powers;" and he adds the humane proverb that "singing birds must not be too well fed."*

* "Life of Shelley," vol. ii. p. 44.

"December 29th, 1820.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"We have been very anxious to hear from you since we saw that your paper had been honoured with the peculiar attention of the A.G. [Attorney-General], yet no letters come. . . . Before this comes to hand you will of course have written—one of your letters, which are as rare as fountains in the stony Arabia, will have given us a brief pleasure. Why do you not write oftener? Ah, why are you not rich, powerful, and enjoying?

"We have just been delighted with a parcel of your 'Indicators,' but they also afford full proof that you are not so happy as you ought to be. Yet how beautiful they are! The one upon the 'Deaths of Little Children' was a piece of as fine writing and as exquisite feeling as I ever read. To us, you know, it must have been particularly affecting.* Yet there is one thing well apparent. You, my dear Hunt, never lost a child, or the ideal immortality would not suffice to your own imagination as it naturally does, thinking only of those whom you loved more from the overflowing of affection than from their being the hope, the rest, the purpose, the support and the recompense of life.

"I hardly know whether I do not tease you with so many letters, yet you have made no complaint of that, and besides, you always like to hear about Italy, and it is almost impossible not to write something pleasing to you from this *divine* country, if praises of its many beauties and its delights be interesting to you.

"I have now an account to give you of a wonderful and beautiful exhibition of talent which we have been witnesses of—an exhibition peculiar to the Italians, and like their

* The Shelleys lost their daughter Clara in the autumn of 1818, and William in June, 1819. In an earlier letter to Mrs. Leigh Hunt, Mrs. Shelley writes—"May you, my dear Marianne, never know what it is to lose two only and lovely children in one year—to watch their dying moments—and then at last to be left childless and for ever miserable."

climate, their vegetation and their country, fervent, fertile, and mixing in wondrous proportions the picturesque, the cultivated and the wild—until they become, not, as in other countries, one the foil of the other, but they mingle, and form a spectacle new and beautiful. We were the other night at the theatre, where the *improvvisatore* whom I mentioned in my last letter delivered an extempore tragedy. Imagine a poem as long as a Greek tragedy, interspersed with choruses, the whole conceived in an instant: the ideas and verses and scenes flowing in rich succession, like the perpetual gush of a fast falling cataract; the ideas poetic and just; the words the most beautiful, *scelte*, and grand that his exquisite Italian afforded. He is handsome—his person small but elegant, and his motions graceful beyond description. His action was perfect, and the freedom of his motions outdoes the constraint which is ever visible in an English actor. The changes of countenance were of course not so fine as those I have witnessed on the English stage, for he had not conned his part and set his features. But it was one impulse that filled him—an unchanged deity who spoke within him—and his voice surpassed in its modulations the melody of music.

"The subject was 'Iphigenia in Tauris.' It was composed on the Greek plan (indeed he followed Euripides in his arrangement and in many of his ideas) without the division of acts, and with choruses. Of course if we saw it written, there would be many slight defects of management—defects amended when seen. But many of the scenes were perfect, and the recognition of Orestes and Iphigenia was worked up beautifully.

"I do not know how this talent may be appreciated in the other cities of Italy, but the Pisans are noted for their want of love, and of course entire ignorance of the fine arts. Their opera is miserable—their theatre the worst in Italy. The theatre was very nearly empty on this occasion. The students of the university half filled the pit, and the few people in the boxes were foreigners, except two Pisan

families who went away before it was half over. God knows what this man would be if he laboured and became a poet for posterity instead of an *improvvisatore* for the present! I am inclined to think that in the perfection in which he possesses this art, it is by no means an inferior power to that of a *printed poet.* There have been few *improvisatores* (*sic*) who have, like him, joined a cultivated education and acquirements in languages rare among foreigners. If, however, his auditors were refined, and as the oak or the rock to the lightning, feeling in their inmost souls the penetrative fire of his poetry, I should not find fault with his making perfection in this art the end of his exertions. But to improvise to a Pisan audience is to scatter otto of roses amidst the overweighing stench of a charnel house—pearls to swine were economy in comparison. As Shelley told him the other night, he appeared in Pisa as Dante among the ghosts. Pisa is a city of the dead, and they shrank from his living presence.

"The name of this *improvvisatore* is Sgricci, and I see that his name is mentioned in your 'Literary Pocket-Book.' This had made me think that it were an interesting plan for this same pretty Pocket-Book if you were to give some small account, not exactly a biographical sketch, but anecdotical and somewhat critical, of the various authors on the list. Sgricci has been accused of *carbonarism,* whether truly or not I cannot judge. I should think not, or he would be trying to harvest at Naples instead of extemporising here. From what we have heard of him, I believe him to be good,* and his manners are gentle and amiable, while the rich flow of his beautifully pronounced language is as pleasant to the ear as a sonata of Mozart. I must tell you that some wiseacre professors of Pisa wanted to put Sgricci down at the theatre, and their vile envy might have frightened the god from

* In a letter first published by Mr. Buxton Forman, Mrs. Shelley writes of Sgricci to Miss Clairmont—"In a room he is amusing; I believe him to be good . . . in the theatre he is as a god."—*Gentleman's Magazine,* No. 1789.

his temple, if an Irishman who chanced to be in the same box with him (*sic*, query *them*) had not compelled him (*sic*) to silence. The ringleader of this gang is called Rosini, a man, a speaker of folly in a city of fools; bad, envious, talkative, presumptuous, and one—'chi mai parla bene di chichessia, o di *quei* vivono o dei morte.' He has written a long poem which no one has ever read, and, like the illustrious Sotheby, gives the law to a few distinguished blues of Pisa. Well, good night. To-morrow I will finish my letter, and talk to you about our unfortunate young friend, Emilia Viviani."

The long account of the Contessina which follows, substantially the same as that in the Italian letter already given, will be found in the "Correspondence of Leigh Hunt," vol. i. p. 160. In extracting this passage, beginning with the words, "He has written a long poem," the editor has inadvertently inserted after "He" [Shelley], and after "long poem" [the "Epipsychidion"], misled apparently by the speedy transition to Emilia Viviani. The singular inappropriateness of describing Shelley as giving the law to the Pisan blues is self-evident. The Italian "Sotheby," so strongly denounced by Mrs. Shelley, is referred to by Medwin as "Rosini, author of that episode to the *Promessi Sposi*, the *Monaca di Monza*." *

* Medwin's inaccuracy is often deplored by Shelley commentators. The printers seem to have done their utmost to exaggerate it. Speaking of Peacock's well-known poem, "Rhododaphne," Medwin is made to say—"I refer to 'Rhododendron!'"

"Winter began with us on Christmas Day," Mrs. Shelley continues. "Not that we have had hard frost, but a cold wind sweeps over us, and the sky is covered with dark clouds, and the cold sleet mizzles down. I understand that you have had as yet a mild winter. This and the plentiful harvest will keep the poor somewhat happier this year—yet I dare say you now see the white snow before your doors. Even warm as we are here, Shelley suffers a great deal of pain in every way—perhaps more even than last winter. ..."

"January 1st, 1821.

"Although I always think it of bad augury to wish you a good new year, yet as I finish my letter on this day, I cannot help adding the compliments of the season, and wishing all happiness, peace and enjoyment in this commencing year to you, my dear, dear Marianne, and all who belong to you. I thank you for all the good wishes I know you have made for us. We are quiet now: last year there were many turbulences—perhaps this there will be fewer.

"We have made acquaintance with a Greek, a Prince Mauro Cordati * (*sic*), a very pleasant man, profound in his own language, and who, although he has applied to English little more than a month, begins to relish its beauties, and to understand the genius of its expressions in a wonderful manner. He was *done up* by some alliance, I believe with Ali Pacha, and has taken refuge in Italy from the Constantinopolitan bowstring. He has related to us some very infamous conduct of the English powers in Greece, of which I should exceedingly like to get the documents and to place them in Grey, Bennett, or Sir F. B. [Francis Burdett]'s hands. They might serve to give another knock to this wretched system of things.

"We are very anxious to hear the event of the meeting of

* Prince Mavrocordato is called in Moore's "Life of Byron" the only leader of the Greek cause "worthy the name of statesman;" and his name is so inseparably associated with that of Byron that it is startling to find him surviving till 1865.

Parliament, as I suppose you are in England. Perhaps we exiles are ultra-political, but certainly I have some hopes that something fortunate will soon happen for the state of things in England.

"And Italy? The King of Naples has gone to Troppau with the consent of his Parliament, and that is the latest news. We begin, we hope, to see the crimson clouds of rising peace. And if all is quiet southwards, we have some thoughts of emigrating there next summer. Adieu, my dear Hunt.

"Most affectionately yours,
"MARINA." *

To Pisa also came Lieutenant Edward Elliker Williams and his wife, friends of Shelley's cousin Medwin, and influenced in their choice of a residence by the wish to know Shelley himself; and the two families were constantly together until overtaken by the calamity which laid both homes desolate.

Even at Pisa the old scandals in connection with Clare pursued the Shelleys in a revoltingly aggravated form. Mr. and Mrs. Hoppner, to whom they had been conveyed by the Swiss nurse who took Allegra to Venice, retailed them to Byron,

* On the side of the letter containing the address, Mrs. Shelley adds a request that "a dozen papers of middle-sized pins, an assortment of good needles, a small pointed pair of scissors, an excellent penknife of several blades, a steel-topped thimble, and a few sticks of sealing-wax," may be sent to Horace Smith for her. "Add also a few hundreds of *Brama's* pens," she says, "and let the needles be in a very small morocco case, such as they make on purpose for needles."

with a sort of half-belief. He, who, best of all the world, knew how hideously false they were, listened with a sneer, and repeated them to Shelley —who asked Mary to write in refutation to Mrs. Hoppner. Most unfortunately, Mrs. Shelley's touching and impassioned vindication of her husband was first shown to Byron, who undertook to forward it to the Hoppners, but, to his eternal disgrace, suppressed it. The Shelleys marvelled at the continued silence and coldness of their old friends, and not until Byron's death was the mystery solved by the discovery of Mary's letter amongst his papers. Mrs. Marshall, with, one cannot avoid thinking, a quite gratuitous exercise of charity, says that the letter was in the first instance "probably" only delayed. But if Byron did not deliberately intend to prevent the Hoppners from receiving it, why was so important a communication detained at all?

Trelawny, the picturesque, the romantic, the adventurous, with wild memories and literary aspirations, was the next addition to Shelley's circle, and soon one of his most passionate admirers; welcome also to Mary, because he possessed "the rare merit of interesting her imagination," and "exciting her to think." The Godwins, of course, were harassing the Shelleys with monetary de-

mands, and Clare with her wild projects and anxieties for Allegra, the latter only too well founded. In April the beautiful, precocious child, the idol of the good nuns in whose care she had been placed, died of typhus fever at the convent of Bagnacavallo.

The Shelleys dared not tell Clare until they had taken her away from Byron's immediate neighbourhood in Pisa. Accordingly they all removed to Casa Magni, Lerici, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Williams. When Clare heard the immediate cause of this departure, she bore it with a fortitude which amazed every one. Perhaps to her jealous, exacting, morbidly apprehensive nature, Allegra dead was a source of less anguish than Allegra living, but for ever beyond her influence and control.

Meantime, Shelley was eagerly expecting Leigh Hunt, whom he had repeatedly urged to visit Italy, and to whom he had written in the previous year—

"Byron proposes that you should come out and go shares with him and me in a periodical work, to be conducted here; in which each of the contracting parties should publish all their original compositions and share the profits." *

The prospect was too tempting to be resisted—

* "Correspondence of Leigh Hunt," vol. i. p. 170.

congenial work, the Italian climate and the society of the beloved Shelley! And Leigh Hunt, with his invalid wife and six young children, left Hampstead in November, but owing to a strange series of obstacles and delays did not arrive at Leghorn until July, 1822. Shelley, Edward Williams, and Captain Roberts (who built their boat), with one young sailor, sailed from Lerici to welcome the travellers. They spent a few days together, which would have been delightful but for Shelley's anxiety at seeing Byron already cooling towards the new venture. On the 8th the *Ariel* again set sail for Lerici—but never arrived there; some Italian seamen in a fishing-boat saw her go down in a squall.

For several days Mrs. Shelley and Mrs. Williams felt no uneasiness, thinking that the *Ariel* had been delayed by storm, but when on Friday an anxious note arrived from Leigh Hunt begging Shelley to say how he had got home in the bad weather of the previous Monday, the horror of their position flashed upon them. They posted to Pisa, and Byron gave Lady Blessington a most graphic account of their arrival at Casa Lanfranchi:

"I never can forget the night that Shelley's poor wife rushed into my room, with a face pale as marble, and terror

impressed on her brow, demanding, with all the tragic impetuosity of grief and alarm, where was her husband! Vain were all our efforts to calm her. A desperate sort of courage seemed to give her energy to confront the horrible truth that awaited her. It was the courage of despair. I have seen nothing on the stage so powerful or so affecting as her appearance." *

To the same listener Byron described Shelley as—

"The most gentle, the most amiable and least worldly-minded person I ever met; full of delicacy, disinterested beyond all other men, and possessing a genius, joined to a simplicity, as rare as it is admirable. He had formed to himself a *beau idéal* of all that is fine, high-minded, and noble, and he acted up to this ideal even to the very letter."

And this was the man on whose memory Byron allowed the most horrible imputations to rest—while his wife's eloquent and heart-broken remonstrance was hidden away, to preserve Byron's cynical suggestions from refutation!

On the 18th of July, Trelawny, who had devoted himself to the service of the two desolate women, brought the sad news that the last lingering half-acknowledged hope of mistake or rescue was over. The bodies of Shelley and Edward Williams had been washed ashore.

With Shelley's cremation, in accordance with

* "Conversations of Lord Byron with the Countess of Blessington." Richard Bentley, 1834. Page 76.

her vivacious, original letters must have been more welcome to Mary than her presence—generously though that had always been endured.

Taking a house at Genoa, more for the sake of the Hunts than her own, Mrs. Shelley spurred herself to literary work, the more necessary as Sir Timothy Shelley long refused any assistance to her, or even to his grandson, except on her consenting to relinquish him entirely to some guardian appointed by himself. This Mrs. Shelley with equal spirit and dignity refused, through Byron, who conducted the negotiations. It was then decided that she should return to England. Byron had been profuse in his offers of help, but when the time came, it was Trelawny who furnished her with funds for her journey.

"Byron's unconquerable avarice," she wrote, "prevented his supplying me with money, and a remnant of shame caused him to avoid me. If he were mean, Trelawny more than balanced the moral account. . . . They sailed together [for Greece], Lord Byron with £10,000, Trelawny with £50, and Byron cowering before his eye for reasons you shall hear soon."

The first thing which really amused Mrs. Shelley after her return to England was a dramatized version of "Frankenstein," in which the Monster appeared in the bills as "'——,' by Mr. T. P. Cooke." "Valperga" had then been published,

and she was busy with her novels, and with her most painful but most precious task of collecting Shelley's writings and publishing his "Posthumous Poems." Sir Timothy Shelley consented at last to allow her £100 a year, and she began to mix a little in literary and musical society, being especially at home in Vincent Novello's hospitable family. His daughter Mary (afterwards Mrs. Cowden Clarke), in her "Recollections of Writers," records Mrs. Shelley's beauty and grace, her gentleness to the children, her enjoyment of Novello's music and his brother's singing.*

A less familiar pen-and-ink portrait of her at this period has been left by an anonymous writer who, Lady Shelley said, "must have known her mother-in-law well."

"She was a most interesting, lovable-looking woman, with a skin exquisitely fair, features delicate, of the style and proportion called 'aristocratic,' silky and luxuriant hair which hung in ringlets over her colourless cheek, and, gathered into a cluster behind, waved over her shoulders. . . . She was a degree under the middle height and rather inclined to *embonpoint*." [In an unpublished letter to Leigh Hunt Mrs. Shelley alludes to this tendency and says, "I walk—ye gods, how I walk!" to counteract it; but quite in vain.] "Mary Shelley always seemed to me to bear a strong resemblance to Miss O'Neil. She was graceful in her demeanour and action, and if she sat down it was just in the attitude an

* "Recollections of Writers." By Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke. Sampson Low, 1878. Pages 39-42.

artist would have selected. This was not the result of study; she did nothing for effect. There was a settled sadness, a grave, gentle melancholy in her face and gait, which at once aroused sympathy and interest. Gentleness was ever her distinguishing characteristic. Many years' friendship never showed me a deviation from it. But with the softness was neither irresolution nor feebleness. The most steadfast purpose would be carried out without loud voice or vehement gesture. . . . She was almost morbidly averse to any allusion to herself as an author. To call on her and find her table covered with the unmistakable accessories of book-making, made her nearly as nervous as if she had been detected in the commission of some offence. She was anything but a vain woman either personally or mentally, and had not a taint of coquetry or affectation." *

In July, 1824, Mrs. Shelley wrote to Trelawny:

"The late loss of Lord Byron makes me cling with greater zeal to those dear friends who remain to me. He could hardly be called a friend, but, connected with him in a thousand ways, admiring his talent and (with all his faults) feeling affection for him, it went to my heart when, the other day, the hearse that contained his lifeless form—a form of beauty which I often delighted to behold—passed my windows going up Highgate Hill on his last journey to the seat of his ancestors."

To Mrs. Leigh Hunt she wrote a little later:

"Have you heard of Medwin's book? Notes of conversations which he had (when tipsy) with Lord Byron; every one is to be in it: every one will be angry. He wanted me to have a hand in it, but I declined. Years ago, when a man died, the worms ate him. Now a new set of

* "Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley." By Helen Moore. Philadelphia, 1886. Page 304, etc.

worms feed on the carcase of the scandal he leaves behind him, and grow fat on the world's love of tittle-tattle."

What would she have said could she have survived to see this day of "Society" papers and interviewers?—worms which do not even wait for death before they devour.

Shelley's son Charles died in September, 1826, and Sir Timothy's uncertain supplies to Mrs. Shelley, made on condition of "the name" never appearing in print, which of course seriously handicapped her prospects of literary work, were increased to £250 a year, shortly to be raised to £300.

Mrs. Shelley, who, under an often-referred-to exterior coldness probably inherited or unconsciously imitated from Godwin, had her mother's capacity for passionate friendship, was broken-hearted on finding that Jane Williams, after her marriage to Shelley's friend Jefferson Hogg, boasted of her own influence over Shelley and spoke slightingly of Mary, whose unwavering affection had supported her through the darkest hours of their lives. Mrs. Hogg must have had a shallow nature, quite unworthy of either the love or the pain she aroused; but to Mary she represented one of the few living links with her past.

Another, Trelawny, would fain have drawn closer the bond that united them. He had always

admired her, with a somewhat fitful and captious admiration (though he was occasionally wounded and made indignant by her going to church). He had found her a grateful, constant, and courageous friend. He had freely made use—as her acquaintances invariably did—of her time and her wisdom in his own affairs, especially in negotiating the publication of his "Adventures of a Younger Son," about which she took infinite trouble; and now he offered her what remained of a very frequently bestowed heart. This is her answer:

"My name will *never* be Trelawny. I am not so young as I was when you first knew me, but I am proud. I must have the entire affection, devotion, and above all the solicitous protection of any one who would win me. You belong to womenkind in general, and Mary Shelley will *never* be yours."

The last link—a golden one—was her sole remaining child. For his welfare she toiled and planned and hoped. For him she submitted to annoyance and almost insult from Sir Timothy and his lawyer. She had resolved on a public school education for Percy, but the question of finance raised difficulties which would have seemed insuperable to any one less resolute and devoted. He was sent to Harrow in 1832, and amply rewarded his mother's care. "He improves every day," she wrote, "and is everything I could wish;"

and again—"Percy is well, which is the beginning and end of my existence."

Among new acquaintances Mrs. Norton had the greatest attraction for Mary Shelley: "Had I been a man I should certainly have fallen in love with her: as a woman, ten years ago, I should have been spell-bound, and, had she taken the trouble, she might have wound me round her finger." When, on Godwin's death in 1836, Mary endeavoured to obtain Government assistance for his widow, Mrs. Norton, in a brilliant letter, suggested the manner of her application to Lord Melbourne.

"Godwin had been to his daughter," says Mrs. Marshall, "one of those life-long cares which, when they disappear, leave a blank that nothing seems to fill." His death was also the cause of a serious, though only passing, disagreement with Trelawny, who wanted her to write her father's life, and, with characteristic vehemence, rebuked her for not rushing at once into the field. The long and touching reply, in which she gives her reasons for delay, is one of the best of the many admirable letters quoted by Mrs. Marshall.

Another task, hardly less difficult or painful, Mary was even then engaged upon—her annotated edition of Shelley's works. The family prohibition

as to publishing "the name" appears to have been withdrawn, or the impossibility of obeying it *au pied de la lettre* at last recognized. The slow going back over past sorrows and joys, agonizing in itself to one who felt so keenly, was further embittered by her changed relations to the remaining friend whose fate had been so inextricably associated with her own. "I am torn to pieces by memory," she wrote. "Would that all were mute in the grave!" She was bitterly reproached by Hogg for leaving out the dedicatory lines to Harriet:

"Little does Jefferson, how little does any one, know me! When Clarke's edition of 'Queen Mab' came to us at the Baths of Pisa, Shelley expressed great pleasure that these verses were omitted. This recollection caused me to do the same. What could it be to me? There are other verses" [unquestionably those to Jane Williams] "I should well like to obliterate for ever, but they will be printed; and any to Harriet could in no way tend to my discomfort. . . . They shall be restored, though I do not feel easy as to the good I do Shelley. . . . I am unstable, sometimes melancholy, and have been called on some occasions imperious. But I never did an ungenerous act in my life."

After the completion of this arduous task Mrs. Shelley accompanied her son and two college friends on the first of the tours described in her "Rambles in Germany and Italy." She enjoyed

and benefited by her travels in spite of the pain of memory which must have accompanied her.

Sir Timothy Shelley died in 1844, and Mrs. Shelley's son succeeded to the baronetcy, estates, and a sufficient fortune, reduced though it was by Shelley's legacies to Clare, Leigh Hunt, Jefferson Hogg, and others, besides the repayment of the sums advanced to Mrs. Shelley for his maintenance and education. There is no mention in Mrs. Marshall's book of any reconciliation with Field Place, but the American life of Mrs. Shelley states that Percy "became a favourite with Sir Timothy," and that Lady Shelley, after her husband's death, grew much attached to Mary, and regretted that she had not known her earlier.

Another Lady Shelley, Sir Percy's wife, whose devotion to Shelley's memory, sympathetic kindness to those who remained of his old friends, and graceful contributions to Shelley bibliography, have proved her a worthy member of that remarkable family, was the dearest friend of Mary's closing years. For a time Mrs. Shelley lived with her son and daughter-in-law at Field Place, which Clare occasionally visited. Lady Shelley, unaware of the details of their earlier life, naturally proposed to leave Mrs. Shelley and Miss Clairmont together, and it was a striking testimony to what Mary must

have suffered during the long years of enforced companionship that she replied: "Don't go, dear! Don't leave me alone with her! She has been the bane of my life ever since I was three years old."

Clare died at Florence in 1878. Mrs. Shelley had long preceded her. She never saw the beautiful home at Boscombe for which her son left Field Place. Her strength had been failing for some time; she expired at her own house in Chester Square, in February, 1851, and rests in Bournemouth Churchyard, where the remains of her father and mother have been placed by her side.

"Twice in my life," she wrote, twelve years before, "I have believed myself to be dying, and my soul being alive, though the bodily functions were faint and perishing, I had opportunity to look Death in the face, and I did not fear it. My feeling, especially in the first and most perilous instance, was—I go to no new creation. I enter under no new laws. The God that made this beautiful world made that into which I go. As there is beauty and love here, such is there, and I feel as if my spirit would when it left my frame be received and sustained by a beneficent and gentle Power."

No attempt has been made here to criticise or even enumerate Mrs. Shelley's writings. Her latest biographer's theory that her genius, absorbed in Shelley's, was dwarfed of its individual expansion, may or may not be correct: it is as a loving, suffering, enduring woman; as Shelley's wife, the mother of his son, and the guardian of his fame, that she will live in the hearts of his countrymen and in the history of their literature.

LADY DUFF GORDON.*

WE are said to owe much of our prestige in the East to three women: Lady Hester Stanhope in the Lebanon, Lady Ellenborough in Syria, and Lady Duff Gordon in Egypt. It is not difficult to say which of the three we are most proud of as a typical Englishwoman. No pique with friends or fortune drove Lady Duff Gordon from Europe—no mysticism or ambition leavened for evil her influence in the East. Her generous sympathy, detecting some goodness under the most unprepossessing exteriors, often created the attributes it assumed, while her singular self-possession and freedom from prejudice caused her to be treated as an equal by stately Sheykhs, prone to regard women as inferior beings, and reverenced almost as a deity by humble Arabs, to whom the ways of white women were ordinarily a terror and a scandal.

* This paper appeared in *Temple Bar* some years before the publication of Mrs. Ross's extremely interesting memoirs of her great-grandmother, grandmother, and mother—"Three Generations of Englishwomen."

Birth and education combined to give Lady Duff Gordon the qualities most valuable to her in after-life. She belonged to the aristocracy of intellect. Her paternal grandfather, Jonathan Austin of Creeting Mill, Suffolk, made his fortune by contracts during the war with France, and gave his children a liberal education. "He must have been," says John Stuart Mill, "a man of remarkable qualities. All his sons were of more than common ability and all eminently gentlemen." The eldest, John, served under Lord William Bentinck in Sicily, sold his commission when peace was concluded, was called to the bar, and produced his great work on "Jurisprudence," which was said at once to rank him with Hooker and Montesquieu. Mill warms into one of his rare approaches to enthusiasm when speaking of John Austin's highmindedness in conversation and demeanour; his vigour and richness of expression; his elevating influence on young people. Unfortunately these fine qualities were accompanied by a bitterness of temperament, partly arising from constitutional melancholy, partly from chronic ill-health—and "so exaggerated a sense of his own deficiencies that when his task ought to have been completed he had generally worked himself into an illness without having half finished what he under-

took." Brougham in an unwonted burst of appreciation said—"If John Austin had had health, neither Lyndhurst nor I should have been Chancellor."

In 1819 John Austin married Sarah, youngest daughter of John Taylor—one of those "Taylors of Norwich" with whom to think deeply and write clearly were as much matters of course as to run and talk are to ordinary children. Though not belonging to the family of William Taylor, Mrs. Austin, like her namesakes, might have boasted of transmitting a "family pen," as unfailingly as the Bourbons do an "Austrian lip." Her grandfather was the celebrated Nonconformist divine, John Taylor, whose epitaph was written by Dr. Parr. Her mother, wife of John Taylor the younger, was the eulogized friend of Sir James Mackintosh, and her society possessed that magnetic charm for intellectual men afterwards exercised by her daughter, Mrs. Austin, and her grand-daughter, Lady Duff Gordon.

The beauty and talent of John Austin's bride "imparted to a life of narrow means and incessant labour the attraction and elegance of the best society." Some letters from Mrs. Austin, in Mr. Macvey Napier's "Selections" from his father's correspondence, show how sympathetic and help-

ful a wife she made, and how anxiously she watched over her husband's uncertain health and spirits.

Settling in Queen Square, Westminster, within a door or two of James Mill, and overlooking the gardens of Jeremy Bentham, the house of the young couple became a gathering-place for "all the talents." Here Lucie Austin was born on June 24, 1821. It did not seem likely at first that she would take a place in the brilliant circle, for she could scarcely breathe, and was only fully brought to life by the skill of Maudesley the surgeon. Physical weakness, however, was the only weakness about her. She very soon showed the mental precocity to be expected from a child who called John Stuart Mill (her father's pupil in Roman law) "Bun Don"—brother John—and with him turned Jeremy Bentham's coach-house into a gymnasium, and intersected his flower-beds with threads and tapes "to represent the passages of a panopticon prison"! It says much for Lucie's independence of character that she emerged from these formidable influences the genial, unaffected woman who won all hearts, European or Oriental, wherever her beautiful face was seen.

Lucie's education, like that of most only children of clever people, was indirect rather than systematic.

For many years she was constantly with her parents, the pet and plaything of a circle in which the Carlyles, Stirlings, Bullers, Luttrells, Rogers, and Lord Jeffrey freely mingled. The sort of training she received may be inferred from her astonished comment on hearing a little friend rebuked for being troublesome—"*My* mamma never says 'I don't know,' or 'don't ask questions.'"

At five years old, Lucie accompanied her parents to Germany, returning from her residence there "a little German maiden, with long braids of hair down her back." Her next foreign trip is thus humorously mentioned in one of Sydney Smith's letters:

"Lucy, Lucy, my dear child, don't tear your frock; tearing frocks is not of itself a proof of genius. But write as your mother writes, act as your mother acts; be frank, loyal, affectionate, simple, honest; and then integrity or laceration of frock is of little import. And Lucy, dear child, mind your arithmetic. You know in the first sum of yours I ever saw there was a mistake. You had carried two (as a cab is licensed to do), and you ought, dear Lucy, to have carried but one. Is this a trifle? What would life be without arithmetic, but a scene of horrors? You are going to Boulogne, the city of debts, peopled by men who have never understood arithmetic. By the time you return, I shall probably have received my first paralytic stroke, and shall have lost all recollection of you. Therefore I now give you my parting advice—don't marry anybody who has

not a tolerable understanding and a thousand a year. And God bless you, dear child!"

At Boulogne, Lucie became acquainted with Heinrich Heine, who took an interest in the little girl from hearing her talk German to her mother at the *table d'hôte*. He used to lounge on the pier with her, and tell stories in which mermaids, fish, water-sprites, and a real live old French fiddler with a poodle were fancifully mixed up. Heine's poem, "Wenn ich an deinem Hause," was suggested by Lucie and her *braune Augen*. While Heine wrote verses for Lucie, Lucie sang ballads to him; one, relating the tragical fate of a Ladye Alice, who, when *in extremis*, ate only one spoonful of her spiced and sweetened gruel, while "the parson licked up the rest," especially took the poet's fancy.

To Lucie Mrs. Austin dedicated her translation of Carové's exquisite little "Story without an End," which Carlyle avowed that he loved, while warning the translator that she would be assailed, from certain quarters, with the question, "What does it *prove?*"

In 1836 Mr. Austin was appointed Commissioner at Malta. Lucie was left in England, and went to school for the first time. Her terse and vigorous letters to Mrs. Grote show how far in advance of

her companions, and not improbably of her instructors also, the mind of the school-girl of fifteen must have been. Even then her studies were unconventional. "Accomplishments" she did not attempt to acquire, but Greek and Latin occupied much of her time. At sixteen she resolved to become a member of the Church of England, Lord Monteagle standing sponsor for her; and she thus deprecates Mrs. Grote's possible objections:

"Perhaps you have already heard of my having, and I hope most conscientiously, sought to be admitted by baptism into the Established Church, and you may think with many I ought not to have taken so important a step solely on my own responsibility. But till you tell me so, I will not attempt defence of that which does not appear to come under the denomination 'optional.' I believe I have done my duty, and acted in obedience to the Giver of the commandment 'with promise,' and that in no way could I more honour my parents than by confident trust that they will sanction my conduct. I hope they and I will be but of one heart and one mind on this important point."

Whatever may have been Mrs. Austin's view of the spiritual advantages of this step, she was just the woman to appreciate her young daughter for exhibiting "the courage of her convictions."

Many letters, many diaries, allude to Mrs. Austin's high gifts. Sir James Stephen calls her his "great ally"; Jeffrey writes with unction of

"long, late, and loquacious" breakfasts with "Dick of Dublin" (Dr. Whately) and Sarah Austin; Macaulay pays homage to "the skill, the taste, and the scrupulous integrity of the accomplished lady who, as an interpreter between the mind of Germany and the mind of Britain, has already deserved so well of both countries." She is Sydney Smith's "dear, fair, wise." "Keep a little corner in that fine heart of yours for me," he writes; "a clergyman in your heart will keep all your other notions in good order." He tells her that she "gives routs where every gentleman is a Locke or a Newton, and every lady a Somerville or a Corinne;" and invites her to a philosophical breakfast: "Nothing taken for granted. Everything (except the Thirty-nine Articles) called in question—real philosophers." Asking for some information about Boulogne steamboats, he adds, "Excuse this trouble. I have always compunctions in asking you to do anything useful. It is as if one were to use blonde lace for a napkin, or drink toast and water out of a ruby cup—a clownish confusion of what is splendid and what serviceable." It is not only to herself that he praises her. Writing to Mrs. Somerville of an American authoress who "abuses the privilege of literary women to be plain," he adds

that Mrs. Austin "might be ugly if she chose, but is as decidedly handsome as if she were profoundly ignorant. I call such conduct honourable." Again, he concurs in Mrs. Grote's commendation of their friend: "She is beautiful; she is clear of envy, hatred, and malice; she is very clear of prejudices; she has a regard for me."

Amid this chorus of love and admiration only one dissentient voice is raised—the voice of Harriet Martineau. She speaks severely of the inevitable vanity of authoresses in general whose productions are "of a light kind"—it is a curious coincidence that she is *most* severe on pretty authoresses—and this is what she says of Mrs. Austin in particular. The occasion is Lord Jeffrey's first visit to Miss Martineau:

"Almost before we had well begun to talk, in burst Mrs. A——, a literary woman, whose ways were well known to my mother and me. The moment she saw Lord Jeffrey, she forgot to speak to us, but so thrust herself between Lord Jeffrey and me as actually to push me backward and sit on my knee. I extricated myself as soon as possible, and left my seat. As she turned her back on me, my mother cast a droll glance at me, which I fancy Lord Jeffrey saw; for though one of the most egregious flatterers of this lady—as of vain women in general—he played her off in a manner which she must have been very complacent not to understand."

The story speaks for itself. It is a patent

absurdity to suppose that Mrs. Austin, at whose house every man of intellectual distinction in England, France, or Germany was eager to present himself, should think it worth while to cannon against Miss Martineau in her own drawing-room in order to exchange a few hasty words with an intimate old friend.* Perhaps some lingering spark of Norwich jealousy unconsciously tinged Miss Martineau's view of Mrs. Austin; she never forgot the days when her rigid though intelligent mother was little noticed, and she herself was but a homely girl, while Mrs. John Taylor and her beautiful daughter divided with Mrs. Opie the homage of *savans* who, with all their wisdom, preferred clever pretty women to clever plain ones. It is amusing to find Mrs. Austin disapproving of Miss Martineau as much as Miss Martineau disapproved of Mrs. Austin. The latter is, however, more discriminating in her censure. Writing to Dilke about some literary proposal, she says:

"Miss Martineau is the last person with whom I wish to enter these or any lists. She is my relation, and I have a vast respect for her on a great many points. But her views on many subjects, especially regarding women, are diametrically opposed to mine, and the kind of notoriety

* It should be borne in mind, also, that Mrs. Austin had been one of Jeffrey's contributors to the *Edinburgh Review*.

she courts would make me wish myself three feet underground."

Mrs. Jameson considered that Mrs. Austin had "one of the largest and *healthiest* minds" she ever met with in a person of her own sex. This quality of healthiness was one of the good gifts Mrs. Austin transmitted to her daughter. Fortunate for Lucie that it was so, as her mother, absorbed in literary work, in the care of a suffering and melancholy husband, and in the claims of a wide social circle, left her young, beautiful, and *spirituelle* daughter much to her own devices.

Sir Alexander Duff Gordon met the Austins at Lansdowne House, and became deeply interested in both mother and child. He was often seen in attendance on Lucie, and the usual rumours followed. One day he said abruptly to the young lady, "Do you know, people say we are going to be married." Annoyed at being gossiped about, and above all at being told of the gossip by him, she was about to answer sharply, when he added, "Shall we make it true?" And she replied, with characteristic frankness, "Yes." The old adage, "Happy's the wooing that's not long adoing," was never better exemplified. Young, handsome, and clever, they entered upon as genuine a partnership of affections and pursuits as the Austins them-

selves, but with brighter prospects. After their marriage at St. Mary Abbot's Church, Kensington, in 1840, they also began housekeeping in Queen Square, adding to the old set of friends Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot Warburton, Tom Taylor, Tennyson, and many other famous English men and women; while every foreigner of talent regarded the Duff Gordons' house as a centre of interest.

"I remember," says their eldest daughter, "when a little child, to have been much astonished at Leopold Ranke, walking up and down the drawing-room, talking vehemently in a kind of *olla podrida* of English, French, Italian, German, and Spanish, with now and then a Latin quotation. He was almost impossible to understand, as he talked fast, and mixed up all languages into a compound of his own."

The only book published by Lady Duff Gordon before her marriage was a translation of Niebuhr's "Greek Legends." After marriage she translated Meinhold's "Amber Witch," "The French in Algiers," and Feuerbach's "Remarkable German Crimes and Trials," wrote her "Sketches of German Life," and assisted her husband in translating Ranke's "History of Prussia." Their labours extended over many years of English home life, whose summers were mainly spent with the Austins at Weybridge.

Lady Duff Gordon was always popular with the better class of working men, who were impressed

by her beauty and grace, and attached by her straightforward friendliness. She set up a successful Working Man's Library and Reading-room at Weybridge, with whose members she used to "transact business and talk over the news" on Monday evenings. During the Chartist riots in 1848, the workmen of her friend W. Bridges Adams, the distinguished engineer, volunteered to protect her, and sturdily refused all offers of remuneration. Forty of them mustered at her house, where she gave them a supper, with "songs, sentiments, and toasts."

"Tom Taylor was capital," she wrote, a few days afterwards—"made short speeches, told stories, and kept all in high good humour. And Alick came home at midnight, and was received with great glee and affection."

A stray policeman, who had somehow got among the party, looked rather wonderstruck. In the course of the night a row was quelled by the mere appearance of the "Gordon volunteers."

The Weybridge house being found too small for an increasing family, the Duff Gordons removed to Esher. Mr. Austin felt the separation acutely. Mrs. Grote makes a characteristic reference to his depression in a letter to Nassau Senior:

"Don't you know what is the matter with John Austin? He has been languishing for the want of a listener ever

since Lucie left them in their *meat-safe* of a house, which by the way has killed the Nubian, and no wonder! Ever since, John Austin has *moulted*, like a sick bird, but the presence of a listener or listeners will revive him like magic, you will see."

The Nubian—Hassan el Bakkeet—was a black boy, twelve years old, turned out of doors by his master because he was growing blind, and taken charge of by Lady Duff Gordon. She put him in the hands of an oculist, who cured him and offered him a good situation. But Hassan fell on his knees before his mistress and begged to be allowed to stay, crying, "Five pounds a year with you are sweeter than the twelve pounds a year he offers." This was certainly a forecast of her popularity with "subject races." Hassan made himself absolutely one with the family, proclaiming triumphantly to all callers, on the birth of a son, "*We* have got a boy!" He was zealous for the hospitable credit of the family, and when the late Emperor of the French arrived unexpectedly to dinner, Hassan gravely announced, "Please, my lady, I ran out and bought twopennyworth of sprats for the Prince!"

From Esher, Sir Alexander and Lady Duff Gordon went to Paris, where Barthélemy St. Hilaire lent them his rooms, and they spent "a

very merry time," saddened, however, by the condition in which they found Heine. Though to all appearance slowly dying, in poverty and pain, with a body wasted till it seemed no bigger than that of a child, and a face "like the most painful and wasted *Ecce Homo* ever painted," he brightened at the sight of *der kleine Lucie*, recalled every trifling incident of their Boulogne friendship, and asked after "the parson who drank the gruel water." He hoped Lucie was happy, as she had always been such a merry child. She replied that though no longer so merry as *der kleine Lucie*, she was very happy and contented; and he answered, with a flash of his old satiric fire, that it was good to see a woman who did not carry a broken heart about with her to be mended by all sorts of men, like the women of France. Lady Duff Gordon took her husband to visit Heine, and they bade him good-bye—but not for the last time. Three years later Lady Duff Gordon found Heine her neighbour in the Champs Elysées, still on the pile of mattresses on which she had left him, but looking dead already. He told her that he had made peace with all the world, and at last with God, who had sent her to him as a beautiful angel of death. "Poor poet!" she replied, "do such splendid illusions cling to you that you take a travelling

Englishwoman for Azrael? That used not to be so, for you could not bear us." He said he did not know what had possessed him to be so spiteful towards the English, but England had avenged herself well, having sent him friends—"You and Milnes—that good Milnes—and others."

One other there was indeed, perhaps not mentioned to Lady Duff Gordon, who threw a strange romance over his closing hours—the lovely English girl (a nobler Bettina than Goethe's) who received in return for her devotion the last impassioned outpourings of his genius.

Lady Duff Gordon's recollections of Heine were communicated to Lord Houghton, and published by him without the writer's name, though she also had then passed away. He would not have published them at all had she been living—"For, with all the talent of expression which has made many of her personal experiences on matters of interest known to the world, she would have been seriously annoyed at any public reference to the noble and delightful qualities which have left so deep an impression on all who knew her."

No doubt this reticence accounts for so few glimpses of Lady Duff Gordon being found in the memoirs and diaries of her contemporaries. The portrait must be sought in her own letters, and

there it remains, so brightly presented in many unconscious touches that it is hard to believe the heart that beat so warmly and the hand that wrote so forcibly can be stilled in death. When at Esher, she told a friend that though only thirty she was "ill, old and grey." The illness increased rapidly, and after trying Ventnor, with little benefit, she was recommended a long sea voyage, and sailed for the Cape in July, 1861.

The perfect temper and even enjoyment with which Lady Duff Gordon endured a rough and tedious passage won all hearts, from the captain, who praised her "beautiful" behaviour in neither crying out nor asking questions during a collision, to the ten-year-old middy whose "lovely little dignity" she was so careful to respect. She set "prunes and prism" at defiance in the cause of humanity, and finding one of the passengers, a boy officer, suffering from ague, with two feet of water in his cabin and eight inches in his berth, had him transferred to her servant's berth, and nursed him till he was strong again—afterwards telling her husband that she had caught cold from having "a damp man in her cabin"—though catching cold was at no time a joking matter for her.

Landing at Capetown very ill, she woke from

her first sleep to find "four demons" gliding with noiseless agility about the room, arranging the furniture they had brought from the ship, and making a *gazouillement* in their little soft voices, like that of chimney swallows. "Poor missus sick!" they chirruped to each other, with fearful gestures of incantation, followed by "God bless poor missus! soon well now." The wrath of a cockney housemaid, spectatress of the scene, became sublime. "There, ma'am!" she cried, with just indignation; "you see how saucy they have grown—a nasty, black heathen Mahommedan a-blessing of a white Christian!"

Capetown, Lady Duff Gordon found rather pretty, but at that time neither drained nor paved, and beyond words untidy and out of repair. And Capetown society seemed to her an amalgam of sulky, dispirited Dutch; idle, vulgar, insolent English, jealous of the Dutch, and longing to flog the niggers; and oppressed, cheated, coloured people—Caffres, Malays (Mohammedans), and Africanders. To the amazement of the Capetown aristocracy, many of whom had never ventured far beyond their little capital, she resolved to hire a Malay cart and four horses, and explore the up-country districts. Once fairly on her way, she was charmed by all she saw, from scarlet geraniums

and myrtles growing wild in the hedges, tortoises no larger than half-crowns, and tiny chameleons like fairy dragons; to black-skinned women "with the mysterious and solemn beauty of the Sphinx." Indeed her frequent pæans of the symmetry of coal-black limbs and the lustre of bronzed faces somewhat overtax the reader's sympathy. Simon's Bay was in her eyes "a glorified Scotland, with sunshine, flowers, and orange groves." The keep of horses in that favoured region beats even "one straw a day" for economy; a roll in the dust is often the only refreshment offered them, and where fodder is scarce the native drover philosophically tells his beasts to be satisfied with "more plenty roll."

The picturesque conditions of colonial life unspoiled by the hybrid civilization of young towns were much to Lady Duff Gordon's taste. She delighted in the mud hut, where she had tea, a night's lodging, and breakfast for ninepence—with a "Schiller" lent her by the German-speaking landlord into the bargain; the inn kept by an ex-officer, whose spirited wife cooked, cleaned, nursed her babies, and gave singing and music lessons, "all as merrily as if she liked it;" the Caffre housemaid, whose cotton turban, with her curly wool sticking up through it, "looked like a royal

diadem on her solemn brow," and who "stepped like Juno, with a brimming tub of water on her head, and a brimming pail in each hand;" the young black shepherd, playing on a home-made guitar to his sheep and goats; the blacksmith who hammered and wrought, with silver bracelets gleaming on his strong ebony arms; the gallant old Dutch postmaster, who decorated her letters with flowers, and wished her *vrolyke tydings*. The seasons puzzled her at Capetown, where she found "no spring or autumn, only hot, dry, brown summer, with its cold winds at times, and fresh green winter, all fragrance and flowers. . . . If Christmas seemed odd at Midsummer, Easter in autumn seems positively unnatural."

As Lady Duff Gordon was sitting under an oak-tree in the Plaatz of the missionary industrial settlement at Gnadenthal, waiting for early prayers, one of the Herrenhut brethren approached her with a strange companion. "Here," said he, "is the last Hottentot." This aboriginal relic was about the size of an English child of eleven, with tiny brown hands and feet, and close white wool falling into ringlets on his pointed chin. His piercing eyes were wild and restless, and he put his bared head on one side and peered wistfully into the face of the tall, beautiful Englishwoman

looking down at him with such unwonted gentleness. "Father, I hope you are not tired. You are old," she said. "Yes, I am above a hundred years old, and alone—quite alone." Creeping close to his new friend, he laid his tiny brown claw on her hand, and asked if she had children. "Yes, at home in England." "God bless them!" whispered the old man, patting her hand again.

The Cape "Climate of Paradise," and the equally paradisaical daily diet of thirty peaches, three pounds of muscat-scented grapes like amber eggs, and uncounted apples, pears and figs ("just a little taste of fruits"), did so much for Lady Duff Gordon's health, that in April, 1862, she set her face towards England—taking every step on her homeward way with passionate eagerness. On the 10th of May she embarked in the *Camperdown*, and a letter written on board details a characteristic bit of fun and good nature. The Attorney-General for Cape Colony was one of her fellow-passengers, and as he was attended on board by all the Capetown volunteers and their bands, the excitement was great, and three signals went adrift. In order not to appear churlish through inability to reply to a French vessel, Lady Duff Gordon nobly sacrificed a garment to supply the missing red, while the captain's bandanna furnished the yellow. So the

mot d'ordre for signalling became—"Up go 2.41, and my lady's cloak, which is 7."

Lady Duff Gordon was somewhat irate at hearing that a wider audience than the family circle had enjoyed her bright South African sketches. "You must have fallen into second childhood," she told her husband, "to think of *printing* such rambling hasty scrawls as I write." Very few readers will agree with her when she adds, "I never could write a good letter; and unless I gallop as hard as I can, and don't stop to think, I can say nothing; so all is confused and unconnected." It is just the informal ease of her letters which makes them so charming.

Mrs. Austin, in her preface to the first volume of "Letters from Egypt," points out one chief reason for their directness and simplicity—they were addressed to "the two persons with whom, of all others, the writer felt the least necessity for reserve," her husband and her mother.

Lady Duff Gordon did not long enjoy that reunion so joyfully anticipated. She was unfortunately persuaded to visit Eaux Bonnes, which was unsuited to her in every respect. "Don't let me be put in a dreadful mountain valley to inhale those dismallest of vapours," she wrote long afterwards; "I hear the drip, drip, drip of Eaux

Bonnes, when I am chilly and oppressed, in my sleep." In October of the same year she again left home for her long exile to Egypt. There was a dramatic contrast between the scenes through which she was led by her pilgrimages in search of health. The charm of the Cape lay in its freshness; she preferred it, after the exhaustion of long illness, to Italy; and found in its new, beautiful Nature, unmarred by man, a second youth; while Egypt derives its romance from antiquity, and its majesty and pathos from decay.

Lady Duff Gordon was again accompanied by the English maid, "S.," who went with her to the Cape, and whose invaluable qualifications as a travelling companion were summed up by her mistress in two negatives—"no grumbling, and no gossiping." S. must have been an attractive person in other respects, though of mature age; for at the Cape all the unmarried Dutchmen who approached her made love to her, "not by describing their tender feelings, but by enumerating the oxen, sheep, horses, land, money, etc., of which they were possessed, and whereof, by the law of the colony, she would have become half-owner;" while at Thebes, Lady Duff Gordon received from Mustafa 'Agha, the most rich and important person in the neighbourhood, a formal proposal of

marriage between his son and her servant. The disparity in age he considered no objection at all, and he was ready to pay a handsome dowry for her.

Lady Duff Gordon landed at Alexandria, then the home of her daughter Janet, Mrs. Ross. The city did not make at all a favourable impression. The turbulence of the people distracted one accustomed to the soft voices and gentle ways of the Cape blacks; and the settled melancholy of the faces, the dirt, the shabby-genteel palaces, the cruel beating of boys and girls who do the work of English labourers, were utterly disheartening.

There Lady Duff Gordon met with her faithful attendant Omar, surnamed Abu-l-Haláweh, "the Father of Sweets;" a supple-figured youth, with "soft but anxious eyes." His brother was a very illustrious person, dragoman to the Prince of Wales; but Omar refused to speak to him, because he did not approve of his domestic arrangements and lax morality.

If Alexandria was disappointing, Cairo made amends. "Well may the Prophet smile when he looks down on Cairo!" exclaimed Lady Duff Gordon. "It is a golden existence, all sunshine and poetry." Here she was privileged to see, in a lovely little mosque, the footprints of Mohammed

in two black stones—a relic never before displayed to Frankish eyes. "Egypt is a palimpsest," she says, "in which the Bible is written over Herodotus, and the Koran over that. In the towns the Koran is most visible, in the country Herodotus." At Gebel Sheykh Harnon she saw the hole of Æsculapius's serpent, and fed the birds that used to tear the cordage of the boats where they were not fed, and still come on board by scores for the bread no Reis dare refuse them. Bubastes has not lost her influence, and cats, fed in the Kádie's court at Cairo at the public expense, behave with singular decorum when the "servant of the cats" summons them to dinner.

Even then, when Lady Duff Gordon's kind deeds and gentle words were only known by rumour, her passage up the Nile was a royal progress, and a few hundred eggs, a caldron of milk, or a live sheep were offered to her in picturesque processions wherever her boat stopped.

In places and among people uncorrupted by European greed and formality the old Eastern hospitality survived; a party of slave merchants, "jet-black, and beautiful as the young Bacchus," seeing Lady Duff Gordon stroll by on the bank, asked her to share the hot bread, sour milk, and dates they had spread upon the bank, as naturally

as an Englishman would have stepped aside to let her pass. All doors flew open to her, because she was "one of those Nazarenes whom the Lord Mohammed said were not proud, and wished well to the Muslimeen." She was an honoured guest in Turkish harems, in Coptic merchants' houses, in Arab tents. At Philæ she slept in the Osiris chamber on the roof of the ancient temple, and bathed at daybreak in the crimson Nile. She was invited to drink new milk at a "lodge in a garden of cucumbers," and to take part in religious soirées in the tombs of Sheykhs, where the living head of the family "receives" in honour of his dead ancestor, and music, prayers and coffee alternate. She was welcomed with many flowers of speech by a grimy saint—Simeon Stylites without the column—who had neither eyes nor ears for any one else while she was by; and she made a complete conquest of a very gentlemanlike and amiable Nubian, much looked up to in his native place for having killed a few intrusive tax-gatherers and recruiting officers.

News of the loss of friends will dog one's footsteps, even should they be led "to the remotest mountain of Cathay." At Capetown Lady Duff Gordon learnt the death of Dr. Hawtrey, to whom both her father and herself were deeply attached.

At Asyoot she heard of that of Lord Lansdowne, a lifelong friend to all her family. When Sir Alexander Duff Gordon was recovering from a severe attack of cholera in 1846, Lord Lansdowne lent him his Richmond Villa—Bowood in miniature—for the autumn; and having occasion to pass through London during that time, was "much obliged by their kind hospitality in giving him a dinner and a bed."

"Many," wrote Lady Duff Gordon, "will mourn that kind, wise, steadfast man; no one nowadays will be so noble, with such unconsciousness and simplicity. I have bought two Coptic turbans to make a black dress out of; I thought I should like to wear it for him—here, where 'compliment' is out of the question."

At El Eksur, at a later date, she was to hear of a yet heavier loss. John Austin died, and Lady Duff Gordon wrote to her mother:

"I did indeed feel with you. I have never left off the habit of thinking how I shall tell my father this and that, and how such things would interest him, and what he would say. The thought comes, and with it the sadness, more often than I can tell."

Lady Duff Gordon spent the warmest months of 1863 with her family in England. But as soon as the chill and damp of autumn approached she had again to take wing. After a wretched voyage she was consoled, on arriving at Alexandria, by seeing her daughter coming in a boat to meet her,

"looking fresh and bright and merry," and attended by the faithful Omar, radiant with joy. He extended his enthusiasm to Mrs. Ross, whom Lady Duff Gordon overheard him describing thus:

"By my soul she rides like a Bedawee; she shoots with the gun and pistol; rows the boat; she knows many languages; works with the needle like an Efreet; and to see her hands run over the teeth of the music-box (keys of the piano) amazes the mind, while her singing gladdens the soul! How, then, should her husband ever desire the coffee-shop?"

When Lady Duff Gordon next ascended the Nile it was flooded "seven men's height" above its usual level, and her dahabeeyeh sailed away among the palm-trees, over submerged cotton fields. Her way was through a spectacle of devastation—whole villages inundated and melted "mud to mud," and crowds of half-starved creatures raking feebly among the receding waters in the effort to reconstruct a partial shelter.

Thenceforward her life was a perpetual chase of health, changing with the changing seasons, from Cairo and her dahabeeyeh, to a river steamer and a half-ruined "Theban palace" over the Temple at Khem—but always, whenever she halted, making a host of devoted friends, doing acts of charity and kindness, seeing the quaintest, the prettiest, and too often the most painful sights.

With all its sadness she loved the land; it grew to be her home, and its suffering but grateful people became her people. "On vous aime comme une sœur, et on vous respecte comme une reine," an Arab physician one day said to her. And she could scarcely understand how European travellers could pass through scenes of want and desolation in their gay dahabeeyehs, without a thought for the misery around them. "When I go and sit with the English," she said, "I feel almost as if they were foreigners to me too, so completely am I now *Bint el Beled*—daughter of the country." Throughout her letters she constantly yearns for husband and children, but never for England—she wishes them with her; she does not wish herself with them.

Her heart warmed to the people whose poverty was never ugly to her, whose services were friendly, whom she nursed in sickness, fed in want, and watched beside in death. "By the God most High!" cried one poor father, whose son she had cured, "if ever I find any of the English poor or sick or afflicted up in Feyzóghloo, I will make them know that I, Aboo-Mohammad, never saw a face like the pale face of the English lady bent over my sick boy."

Faith, it must be owned, had often much to do

with the cures Lady Duff Gordon wrought during her extensive medical practice, which she declared herself willing to dispose of on easy terms to any enterprising young English doctor! The natives were intensely superstitious, believing in twins who became cats at night, in holy men seen in the body in two places at once, and in amulets beyond number. An old woman whose powder had been wrapped in a fragment of *Saturday Review* declared, Mashallah! the charm was a powerful one! For though she had not been able to wash off all the fine writing from the paper, even that little had done her a great deal of good!

At weddings or funerals Lady Duff Gordon was alike welcome and honoured; and while her sympathies were roused by the people's joys and sorrows, her keen sense of humour kept her amused at their oddities.

Eastern life is to this close observer a perpetual panorama. She sees from her windows a Turkish wedding procession, with a pretty boy of thirteen for bridegroom, dressed in scarlet robe and turban, preceded by flaring cressets and surrounded by men carrying tapers and singing songs; or a Coptic bride dressed in white and blazing with diamonds passes by, abyatees with harp, sackbut, and dulcimer, playing and singing before her, and little

girls in scarlet habarahs acting as bridesmaids. Or, the scene changing, as life itself changes, a poor man who has lost his little son creeps out of his desolate home and stands under her window, wailing "Oh, my boy, my boy!" wetting the dust with his tears, and calling on the passers-by to grieve with him. Or a little half-black child, not two years old, wearing "a bit of iron wire in one ear, and iron rings round his ankles—and nothing else," solemnly gazes at the Inkeleezeh Sitt for an hour or so, and then dances before her "to amuse her mind;" his uncle having made him fit to be seen by emptying a pitcher of water on his head to rinse off the dust—"which," says Lady Duff Gordon, "is equivalent to a clean pinafore."

The precocity of Eastern children is marvellous. A boy of twelve fell desperately in love with a pretty Baroness K., more than twice his age, put on a turban for the first time to look like a man, and seated himself cross-legged on the carpet before Lady Duff Gordon, to tell her of his devouring passion and beg some medicine to "make him white" and improve him in the eyes of his beloved. The son of the Sultan of Darfoor, a "pretty imperious little nigger" about eleven, dressed in a yellow silk caftan and scarlet burnous, being presented to her, exclaimed scornfully—"Why,

she is a woman; she can't talk to me!" But a box of French sweetmeats altered his opinion, and on being asked how many brothers he had, the young prince condescended to reply, "Who can count them? They are like mice!"

The Arabs often carry their reverence for the other sex to the opposite extreme. Omar submitted to be bullied and lectured by Zeynib, a Nubian girl of eight who had been given to Lady Duff Gordon, and when laughed at for his docility, answered—"How I say anything to it? That one child!" When Abd-el-Kádir was expected at Cairo, Lady Duff Gordon's donkey-driver asked her if he were not Akhu-l-Benát (a brother of girls). She said she did not know that he had any sisters. "The Arabs, O lady," was the reply, "call that man 'a brother of girls' to whom God has given a clean heart to love all women as his sisters, and strength and courage to fight for their protection." Even polygamy is, according to Lady Duff Gordon, often merely consideration for the necessities of "the weaker vessel." Hearing that Hassan, the janissary of the American consulate, had married his brother's widow, and adopted both her boys, she said the two wives did not sound to her very comfortable. "Oh no," replied Omar, "not comfortable at all for the man, but he take

care of the women. That is what is proper. That is the good Muslim."

Men, however, are recognized as the rightful heads of the house; and when Sir Alexander paid his wife a visit in 1864, Omar completely dethroned her, and took all orders from "the master," plainly showing by his manner that he thought she should do the same. During that visit Lady Duff Gordon first fully realized how Oriental she had become. She fancied her husband found her way of life comfortless: "I had got so used to *having nothing*," she wrote to her mother, "that I forgot how it would seem to a new-comer."

Her domestic staff was truly Eastern in primitiveness. Her black boy, Mabrook, who called himself a *Nyan-Nyan* (cannibal), but was a most jolly and good-tempered one, washed linen vigorously with his round ebony arms; Omar ironed; and Achmet cooked and waited at table. "What," she asked, "would an English 'respectable' cook say to seeing 'two dishes and a sweet' cooked over a little old wood on a few bricks, by a baby in a single blue shirt?" She learnt to prefer "food with fingers" (Arab fingers, that is, which are washed fifty times a day), and was amused at the shyness of some English lord to whom she gave an Arab dinner, and who "looked quite frightened"

at the sight of the tray, and the black fingers in the dishes.

"Would you know the wife of your bosom," she asked Sir Alexander, "in a pair of pink trousers and a Turkish *tob?* The woman who came to sew could not make a gown, so she made me a pair of trousers instead."

Other ladies of undoubted propriety were yet more lightly clad. Mabrook, his mistress was gravely informed, came of a respectable family, for his mother beat him well when he told lies, "and wore a cow's tail down to her heels behind." That tail, a girdle, and a tiny leathern apron, constituted her whole wardrobe. Eastern women in general, however, dress richly, and treat their smart clothes in a reckless way, that gives them "a grand air no Parisian duchess could ever hope to imitate. Not that I think that a virtue, mind you," adds Lady Duff Gordon, "but some vices are genteel."

The chief secret of Lady Duff Gordon's popularity was her readiness to adopt the social equality which prevails in the East. She asked an Arab álim, or theological student, descended from the Prophet, whether Muslims called themselves children or slaves of God? "It is all one," he said, "children or slaves. Does not a good man care for both

tenderly alike?" This feeling of equality gives dignity and friendliness to Eastern manners, greatly aided by the personal symmetry of the natives. "To see a Bedawee and his wife walk down the streets of Cairo is superb. Her hand resting on his shoulder, and scarcely deigning to cover her haughty face, she looks down on the Egyptian veiled woman, who walks behind her lord and master and carries the burden." Her donkey-girl at Thebes, Ward-es-Shám (the Rose of Syria), dressed like a Greek statue, was "a feast to the eyes." And "How good is a drink of Nile water," she exclaims, "out of an amphora held to your lips by a woman as graceful as she is kindly! 'May it benefit thee!' she says, smiling, with her beautiful teeth and eyes."

The poorest people called Lady Duff Gordon "O sister!" and talked to her with perfect respectfulness and ease. The Bedawee, in a bazaar where she bought a white cloak, assisted in the bargain, and wrapped her up in the garment; her Cairene washerwoman, saying that she had made the city "delightful with her presence," invited her to dinner; the carpenter, who mended her boat, went on Sunday to pay her a visit, richly dressed, and mounted on a fine black donkey, and asked her to accompany him on a ride; a splendid old

Arab, who had been Belzoni's guide, adopted her as his "Lady Great-Grand-daughter."

"You see," she says, "how the Thousand and One Nights are quite true and real—how great Beys sit with grocers, and carpenters offer a civility to noble people. This is what makes Arab society quite unintelligible and impossible to most Europeans."

When, in 1865, the first volume of Lady Duff Gordon's "Letters from Egypt" was given to the public, her family were waiting in painful suspense for news of her departure from El Uksur (where there had been disturbances and bloodshed) and her voyage down the Nile. This had been delayed by illness, and as the illness increased, so did the longing for her dear ones. She often expresses it, though with the unselfish warning that they must not come to Egypt merely to please her, and that she is too full of pain to give pleasure to them. "I was so pleased," she tells her husband, "to see two young men, your opposite neighbours in London, who said they saw you every morning go down the street—*ojala!* that I did so too!" But she adds, "I know I am oppressive company now, and am apt, like Mr. Woodhouse, in 'Emma,' to say, 'let us *all* have some gruel.'"

In 1867 Mr. and Mrs. Ross, about to leave for

Europe, went up the Nile to bid Lady Duff Gordon good-bye. At one of the fêtes given in their honour, Mrs. Ross covered herself with confusion by an artless blunder. Having always been accustomed to hear their host, the Maoun of Keneh, spoken of as *Oom-az-zeeneh*, she so addressed him, with scrupulous politeness. Omar with difficulty concealed his amusement, and at last said to her:

"Oh, Sitt, that is not his name, but people call him so for laughing. *Oom-az-zeeneh* means 'mother of beauty,' and seest thou not that he is ugly, and has but one eye?"

Lady Duff Gordon's next English visitor was her only son, and among other preparations for his arrival, she wished to have her boat painted. But she got hold of the very barber of the "Arabian Nights" turned painter, and his endless tongue nearly drove her crazy. First, three pounds were wanted to buy paint:

"'None but the best of paint is fitting for a noble person like thee, and that thou knowest is costly, and I am thy servant, and would do thee honour.'

"'Very well; take the money, and see, O man, that the paint is of the best, or thy backsheesh will be bad also.' He has scarcely begun, when he rushes in to say, 'Come, O Bey, O Basha, and behold the brilliancy of the white paint, like milk, like glass, like the full moon!'

"'Mashallah! But now be so good as to work fast, for

my son will be here in a few days, and nothing is ready.' Fatal remark! Out poors the flood again:

"'Mashallah Bismallah! May the Lord spare him, may God prolong thy days. Let me advise thee how to keep the evil eye from him, for doubtless thy son is beautiful as a mem-look of one thousand purses. Remember to spit in his face when he comes on board, and revile him aloud that all the people may hear thee, and compel him to wear torn and dirty clothes when he goes out. And how many children hadst thou, and our master, thy master?' etc., etc. 'Shúkr Allah! all is well with us,' cries Lady Duff Gordon, in desperation: 'but by the Prophet, paint, O Maalim, and do not break my head any more!'"

When her son arrived, Lady Duff Gordon felt his presence "like a new life." "He says he is thoroughly happy," she wrote to Sir Alexander, "and that he never was more amused than with me, which I think flattering." Half her old house at Luxor, her "Theban palace," fell down into the temple beneath, six days before they arrived there. Fortunately her furniture had been moved, some misgivings being felt about the state of the building.

At Keneh they saw a theological curiosity—a Copt who had turned Presbyterian, and persuaded a hundred others to do likewise. He was sent to the Soudan by the patriarch, but brought back. "He is a splendid fellow," said Lady Duff Gordon, "and I felt I looked on the face of a Christian martyr, a curious sight in the nineteenth century. . . . When he was gone, the Mufti said,

'Ah, we thank them, for though they know not the truth of Islam, they are good men, and walk straight, and would die for their religion; their example is excellent. Praise be to God for them.'"

An excursion to Beyroot in a Russian steamer cost Lady Duff Gordon an almost fatal illness, during which she found that the Sisters of Charity would not nurse a Protestant! nor the Prussians a non-Lutheran! Humiliating contrast to Muslim tender-heartedness.

At Assouan she got better, went on board her own boat, and prepared to go once more up the river, taking with her a young sailor who "sang like a nightingale," and turned out to be a professional singer from Cairo, who joined her crew "for fun." His sweet strong voice attracted crowds to hear him, and prayers were offered in the mosque at Esneh that Lady Duff Gordon might be rewarded for the pleasure she afforded them. "Fancy," she says, "desiring 'the prayers of this congregation for the welfare of the lady who gave me her opera-box last Saturday!'"

Christmas Day, 1868—her last Christmas Day—she spent at Esneh, making "fantasia," after the Eastern fashion, with songs and dances.

"How I did long to transport the whole scene before your

eyes!" she writes to her husband—"Ramadan warbling intense love-songs, and beating a tiny tambourine, while Zeynib danced before him, and gave the pantomime to his song; and the sailors and girls and respectable merchants sat *pêle-mêle* all round the deck, and the player on the rabab drew from it a wail like that of Osis for dead Osiris. I never quite know whether it is now or four thousand years ago, when I am in the dreamy intoxication of a real Egyptian fantasia."

The improvement in her health, however, she well knew could only be temporary; and the thought began to press on her, as it does on most sensitive people so circumstanced, of opportunities for doing good work allowed to slip idly by.

"Now that I am too ill to write," she says to Sir Alexander, "I feel sorry that I did not persist and write on the beliefs of Egypt, in spite of your fear that the learned would cut me up. For I honestly believe that knowledge will die out with me which few others possess. You must recollect that the learned know books, and I know men, and, what is more difficult, women."

This she undoubtedly did; but Dr. W. H. Russell, who must be accepted as an authority on Eastern matters, thinks she did not know them quite so well as she imagined, and that those around her played a little on sympathies so easily aroused. "The warmth of her nature," he says, "has been touched by the apparent degradation of the Egyptian people, and in her letters she has written of the Government, and especially of Ismail

Pasha, with great severity. Her physical weakness rendered her dependent on others; and there is no doubt that, perceiving the tendency of her mind and the direction of her inquiries, her informants were disposed to exaggerate any acts which seemed repressive or harsh, and to find out causes of complaint." This may have been done in all honesty, and even unconsciously, for there was a sufficient substratum of wrong and misery in that oppressed country, and it is natural that griefs confided to a sympathetic ear should lose nothing in the telling; strong feelings will find strong expression.

When the Prince of Wales and his party returned from Philæ, Dr. Russell paid a visit to Lady Duff Gordon. They had been reading the first volume of her "Letters" on their voyage, and wished to see the writer. Dr. Russell speaks prosaically of her "Theban palace" as "rickety rooms constructed of very frail materials in a story of a ruined temple at Luxor;" and adds that when he saw her she was living entirely in her dahabeeyeh, moored above the town of Assouan in a sort of pool, a couple of miles below the Cataract.

"Most travellers," he said, "call on the invalid, and find it worth their while if they are received, for her conversation

is *spirituel* and animated, and she has a great deal of information—rather about the people, however, than the country. The boat was in the full blaze of the sun, but was covered in on deck—a modest but not uncomfortable dahabeeyeh, with a group of natives on deck, among whom we recognized Lady Gordon's often-quoted dragoman. The lady was reclining on a sofa in the cabin, which was cool and airy. Her face, notwithstanding traces of severe illness, presented in its fine outlines a type of distinction and refinement, and her clear, deep eyes looked out on the world with an expression full of sincerity and enthusiasm. But her features were worn, and the hectic on her cheek, the colour of her lips, and her wasted hands and frame prepared one for the difficulty with which she spoke, and for the cough and catching of the breath which interrupted her conversation. She wore a long loose Oriental robe, and a fez cap, beneath which appeared her hair, fast turning white, cut short all round. At this time there is an additional trouble on the poor lady. A French newspaper, seizing on a passage in one of her letters, written long ago, in which she described the misery of the fellaheen, and rated the Viceroy very sharply, has a bitter article on the reported engagements of Mademoiselle Schneider and other expensive *artistes* for the Cairo theatre. Ismail Pasha has been made aware of the attack, and is said to be much incensed against the writer. Indeed, Lady Duff Gordon believes that she is scarcely safe, and is sure that Omar, her dragoman, will fall on evil days when she is no more."

She was relieved from this anxiety by the Prince of Wales appointing Omar his own dragoman. When Lady Duff Gordon was describing to the Prince the apathy of the Viceroy in the presence of the famine in Upper Egypt, Omar, who entered with pipes and coffee, interposed, saying that some

thousand measures of corn had been sent up for the people. "Perhaps," says Dr. Russell, "this information might not have been forthcoming had not we been present."

Before leaving Egypt the Prince of Wales paid Lady Duff Gordon another visit, this time accompanied by the Princess. "He was most pleasant and kind," she says, "and the Princess too. She is the most perfectly simple-mannered girl I ever saw. She does not even try to be civil like other great people, but asks blunt questions, and looks at one so heartily with her clear honest eyes that she must win all hearts. They were more considerate than any people I have seen, and the Prince, instead of being gracious, was, if I may say so, quite respectful in his manner; he is very well-bred and pleasant, and I am sure has a kind heart. My sailors were so proud at having the honour of rowing him *in our own boat*, and of singing to him!"

The letter just quoted was written at Cairo, on the 15th of June, 1869. "The end came more quickly than any one expected," says Mrs. Ross; and on the 14th of July Lady Duff Gordon died. Her son was with her; her husband and her daughter were preparing to join her. She had wished to die at Thebes, "among her own people,"

and to rest in a tomb prepared for her by the Sheykh, a descendant of the Prophet, among those of his own family. But when she knew that she would never return to Thebes, she asked to be buried as quietly as possible in the English cemetery at Cairo.

Her memory still lives among those she loved and served, and her good influence acts and reacts in Egypt to this day.

An American told Lady Duff Gordon's friend Mustafa that her book had made him wish well to the Egyptian people, and desire to behave kindly to them; and her álim, Sheykh Yussuf, was puzzled and bewildered by the civilities he received from strangers.

Mr. Eden, in his "Nile without a Dragoman," says that Mustafa 'Agha, then "our unpaid and obliging consular agent," outdid his customary "civility and affection in favour of a friend of Lady Duff Gordon." He adds:

"Her house at Luxor is a modern white building, stuck like a mushroom on the top of an off-part of the ruins of an ancient temple. In front of it lies the river, behind is a rubbishy courtyard, on all sides a sea of dust, and not one speck of green affords an atom of shade or repose to the eye, weary of the heat and glare. A more uninteresting habitation it would be hard to find, and if evidence were wanted of the perfection of the Theban climate, would it not be sufficient to point out that such a person as Lady

Gordon endured the exile and discomforts of Luxor for its climate's sake?"

This was Lady Duff Gordon's Theban palace, which she said grew "more and more beautiful" to her, and of which she wrote: "The view round my house is magnificent on every side. Across the Nile in front, and over a splendid expanse of green and a range of distant orange-buff hills to the south-east." Clearly, a scene's beauty sometimes lies in the eye that sees it, as much as a jest's felicity does in the ear that hears it.

Mr. Eden thought Lady Duff Gordon's estimate of the people as much too high as her praise of that part of their country which she made her home. But their gratitude he was forced to admit: "Her constant kindness and care for the sick and poor within reach of Luxor," he says, "has caused her memory to be almost worshipped by the Theban people of all classes. From the 'agha to the beggar, nobody has any but good words for her, and few can say of these enough."

INDEX.

Abercorn, the Marchioness of, orders Miss Owenson to go and be married, ii., 132

Abercorn, the Marquis of, ii., 36; calls on Mrs. Inchbald, *ib.*; his extreme fastidiousness, 127; regard for Sydney Owenson, *ib.*

Acton-Tindal, Mrs., on Lucas's portrait of Miss Mitford, ii., 189; description of Miss Mitford, 190

Addison, Joseph, letter to Mr. Wortley Montagu, i., 132

Alderson, Amelia, letter of, describing Mrs. Inchbald, ii., 34; early education of, 61; sees "the female soldier," Hannah Snelling, and "the female sailor," Anna Maria Real, 63; fondness for attending Assize Courts, *ib.*; seated on the bench, 64; anecdote of her uncle, *ib.*, *note*; plays written by her, 65; letter to Mrs. Taylor, 66; flirtation with Godwin, 67; calls Mrs. Inchbald "*womanish*," *ib.*; attends the State trials, 68; contradicts Beloe's story of her conduct in Court, 69; first meeting with Opie, 71; letter to Mrs. Taylor describing his persevering wooing, 73, 74; marriage, *ib.* (*see* OPIE, MRS.)

Alderson, Dr., marriage of, ii., 60; character of his wife, *ib.*; her death, 61; his love for his daughter Amelia, *ib.*; his political opinions, 65; consents to his daughter's marriage, 74; approves of her becoming a Quakeress, 97; death, *ib.*; kindness to poor patients, 98, *note*

Alexander I., Emperor of Russia, mobbed by the English ladies, ii., 90

Anne, Queen, bestows the Great Seal on William Cowper, and tells him to cut off his hair, i., 54; death of, 120
Arnold, Benedict, his duel with Lord Balcarres, i., 277, *note*
"*Auld Robin Gray*," ballad of, i., 263; sequel to, 282
Austin, John, described by John Stuart Mill, ii., 262; distinguished friends of, 265; appointed Commissioner at Malta, 266; depressed at his daughter's departure, 273; death, 287
Austin, Mrs., her marriage, ii., 263; her talents, 264; tributes to, from famous men, 268; her beauty, 269; nonsensical story of, by Miss Martineau, *ib.*; disapproves of Harriet Martineau, 270; preface to her daughter's letters, 282; letter to, on her husband's death, 287
Austin, Lucie, her birth, ii., 264; her childhood, 265; first visit to Germany, *ib.*; letter to, from Sydney Smith, *ib.*; visit to Boulogne, 266; meeting with Heinrich Heine, *ib.*; letter to Mrs. Grote, 267; marriage, 271 (*see* DUFF GORDON, LADY)

Baillie, Joanna, letter to Mary Berry, i., 345; her "Plays on the Passions," 352
Balcarres, Countess of, mode of bringing up her children, i., 268; asks Lady Anne for a sequel to "Auld Robin Gray," 282; love for the drama, *ib.*, *note*; her ready wit, 301; handsome "for a girl of her age," at eighty, *ib.*; cheerful old age, *ib.*; death at ninety-three, 303
Balcarres, Alexander, fourth Earl of, an Ensign at fifteen, i., 276; his gallant services in America, 277; his reply to George III., *ib.*, *note*; duel with Arnold, *ib.*; marriage, 278; Pitt's description of him, *ib.*; made Governor of Jersey, 278; his services during the Maroon rebellion in Jamaica, *ib.*; settles at Haigh Hall, Lancashire, *ib.*
Balcarres, James, third Earl of, "a well-dressed hermit," i., 265; campaign in Flanders, *ib.*; refused promotion because of early Jacobite sympathies, 266; sells his commission, *ib.*; settles at Balcarres, *ib.*; chooses his wife, *ib.*; his eccentric appearance, 267; refused by Miss Dalrymple, 268; falls ill, and bequeaths half his estate to Miss Dalrymple, *ib.*; their marriage, *ib.*; his occupa-

tions described by his daughter, 274; his kindness of heart, *ib.*; his death, 275; his literary remains, *ib.*

Balcarres, Dowager Countess of, i., 277, *note*

Balcarres, the old House of, described by Lady Anne Barnard, i., 270; Sunday at, *ib.*; a large family party at, 271; scarcity of money at, *ib.*; illustrious visitors to, 273; why it was never attacked by robbers, 274; bought by Robert Lindsay, 303; offered by him to Lord Balcarres, *ib.*

Baltimore, Lord, an admirer of Mrs. Pendarves, i., 172; his marriage, *ib.*; description of his wife, 182

Barnard, Andrew (son of the Bishop of Limerick), marries Lady Anne Lindsay, i., 287; appointed Colonial Secretary, *ib.*; accompanies Lord Macartney to the Cape, *ib.*; his return to England, 301; death, *ib.*

Barnard, Lady Anne (*see* LINDSAY, LADY ANNE), accompanies her husband to the Cape as a "binding cement," i., 287; her qualifications for her new duties, *ib.*; her pleasure in Lord Macartney's society, 288; first impressions of Cape Town, 290; ball at Government House, 291; takes possession of Paradise, 292; natural curiosities of the country, 293; sends Queen Charlotte a necklace made of the seeds of the castor-oil plant, 294; visits Stellenbosch, 295; the carriage of "Old Q." placed at her disposal, *ib.*; describes Dutch amusements, 296; takes a trip to the interior, 297; travels with a lady "preserved," 298; visits the settlement of the Moravian Fathers, 299; describes a Dutch beauty, 300; resides with her sister after her husband's death, 301; revisits Scotland, *ib.*; mode of life in Berkeley Square, 304; death, *ib.*

Barrett, Elizabeth Barrett, accompanies Miss Mitford "to see the giraffes," ii., 194; her appearance, *ib.*; Miss Mitford's love for her, 196; her delicate health, *ib.*; her conversation, 197; loss of her brother, *ib.*; her letters, *ib.*; Haydon leaves some of his papers and pictures in her charge, 199; her marriage, 200 (*see* BROWNING, MRS.)

Bas Bleu Assemblies, alleged origin of the name, i., 225, *note*

Bath, society at, in the eighteenth century, i., 211

Beattie, Dr., his unsuccessful attempt to convert Mr. Montagu, i., 244

Bedford, Duke of (1771), his death, i., 240
Bellenden, Mary, privately married to Colonel Campbell (afterwards Duke of Argyll), i., 84
Beloe, the Rev. W., story of Amelia Alderson and Horne Tooke, ii., 69; denied by her, *ib.*
Bentley, Mr. Richard, purchases the later letters of Mrs. Montagu, i., 236
Bernadotte, King of Sweden, "like a ferocious sheep," ii., 90
Berri, Duc de, assassination of, i., 341
Berry, Agnes, her education, i., 309; first acquaintance with Horace Walpole, 313; letters to her from Horace Walpole, 314, 326; in Paris during the Revolution of 1830, 343; notes from her journal, *ib.*; described by Baroness Bunsen, 347; mentioned by Thackeray, 348; thought by him the more clever of the sisters, 349; anecdote of, by Lord Houghton, *ib.*; her death, in January, 1852, 351
Berry, Mary, her friendship for Horace Walpole, i., 306; her parentage, 307; recollections of her mother, 308; early troubles, *ib.*; her education, 309; foreign travel, *ib.*; her melancholy temperament, 310; in Rome, *ib.*; in Naples, 312; return to England, *ib.*; first acquaintance with Horace Walpole, 313; letters to, from Horace Walpole, 314-329; visit to Yorkshire, 315; return to the Continent, 318; describes a group of princes at Turin, 320; settles at "Little Strawberry," 324; visits Cheltenham, 327; becomes engaged to General O'Hara, 328; refuses to accompany him to Gibraltar, *ib.*; lasting regrets, 329; with her sister at Lord Orford's death-bed, *ib.*; her love of gardening, 330; her comments on the situation in France, 331; "the *Man Bonaparte*," *ib.*; goes to Paris, 332; presented at the Tuileries, 333-335; her play of *Fashionable Friends* produced at Drury Lane, 335; presented to the Princess of Wales, *ib.*; at Tunbridge Wells, 337; meets the Prince Regent and is coldly received, *ib.*; edits Madame du Deffand's "Letters," *ib.*; her impressions of Byron, *ib.*; her horror of Talleyrand, 338; describes the Duke of Wellington, 339; residence at Genoa, *ib.*; illness and death of her father, 340; publishes

her "Life and Letters of Lady Russell," *ib.;* curious encounter with the Queen of Sweden, 340–341; her account of the assassination of the Duc de Berri, 341; visits Romè, 342; spends a day with the Orleans family at Neuilly, 343; publishes "Social Life in France and England," *ib.;* visits Louis Philippe at Fontainebleau, 344; meets Moore at Bowood, 345; severe judgment of herself, 347; friendship for Thackeray, 348; anxiety for her sister, 351; her death in November, 1852, *ib.;* burial in Petersham Churchyard, 352; funeral service read by Dean Milman, *ib.;* Memorial verses by Lord Houghton, 352–353

Berry, Robert, disinherited by his uncle, i., 308; his improved circumstances, 309; described by Horace Walpole, 313; takes up his abode at "Little Strawberry," 324; in attendance on the Princess of Wales at Tunbridge Wells, 337; death of, 340; burial at Carignano, *ib.*

Betty, Master ("the Infant Roscius"), acts in *Lovers' Vows,* Mrs. Inchbald's adaptation of Kotzebue's play, ii., 43

"*Blazing World, the,*" a romance, i., 38

Blucher, Field Marshal, personated by Lady Caroline Lamb, ii., 91

Bocage, Madame du, describes Mrs. Montagu's literary breakfasts, i., 225; praises the costume of English ladies, *ib.*

Bonaparte, Letitia (Madame Mère), described by Mary Berry, i., 332; Mrs. Cosway takes Mrs. Opie to her house, ii., 82; Lady Morgan's visit to her, 144

Bonaparte, Madame (afterwards the Empress Joséphine), receives Mrs. Damer and the Berrys, i., 333; her costume, 334

Bonaparte, Napoleon, Mary Berry's opinion of, i., 341; his manner at a reception at the Tuileries, 333; described by Mrs. Opie, ii., 81

Boner, Charles, letter to, from Miss Mitford, ii., 200

Borghese, Princess (Pauline Bonaparte), described by Mary Berry, i., 342; praises Lady Morgan's magnanimity, ii., 144; anecdote of her, *ib., note*

Bourbon, the Duc de, 320 and *note*

Bowles, Caroline, letter to Southey about "Friend Amelia," ii., 101, *note*

Bristol, Lady, and her daughter-in-law, i., 87, 90

Browning, Mrs. (*see* ELIZABETH BARRETT BARRETT), publication of her letters to R. H. Horne, ii., 198; "transformed" by her marriage, 200; life in Italy, *ib.*; brief return to England, 201

Browning, Robert, first meeting with Miss Mitford, ii., 194; marriage, 200

Brydges, Sir Egerton, on the Marquis and Marchioness of Newcastle, i., 27, 32, 44

Buckinghamshire, Albinia, Duchess of, masquerade given by her, ii., 93, 96

Bunbury, Sir Charles, one of Mrs. Inchbald's admirers, ii., 24; his first marriage, 26, *note*; second marriage, 27

Bunsen, Baroness, on Mary Berry, i., 347

Burdett, Sir Francis, committed to the Tower, ii., 89

Burke, Edmund, description of Mrs. Delany, i., 195; at Beaconsfield, 242; letters to, from Lady Anne Lindsay, on the death of his son, 286, *note*

Burney, Fanny, presented to George III. and Queen Charlotte by Mrs. Delany, i., 201; appointed "Dresser" to the Queen, *ib.*; criticism on, by Mrs. Delany's waiting-woman, 202; Dr. Johnson's advice to, 249; runs away when "Evelina" is mentioned, 252; invited to Mrs. Montagu's house-warming, *ib.*; reads Cumberland's "Feast of Reason" to Queen Charlotte and identifies some of the characters, 257

Bute, Countess of, describes her grandfather the Duke of Kingston, i., 137, *note*; rebukes her mother for reading novels, 155; character of, by Horace Walpole, 157, *note*

Byron, Lord, described by Mary Berry, i., 337; at Lady Cork's rout, ii., 123; first acquaintance with Shelley, 227; suppresses Mrs. Shelley's letter to Mrs. Hoppner, vindicating her husband, 246; proposes that Leigh Hunt should go to Italy and join him in founding a periodical, 247; describes Shelley to Lady Blessington, 249; death, 253

Campbell, Thomas, described by Miss Mitford, ii., 178

Cape Town, nearly a hundred years ago, i., 290
Caroline, Queen of Naples, i., 311; represents Ceres, 312
Carter, Elizabeth, letter to, from Mrs. Montagu, i., 233; her description of Mrs. Montagu, *ib.*; her personal appearance, *ib.*, *note*
Castlereagh, Lord, his love of music, ii., 127; kindness to Sydney Owenson, *ib.*, *note*
Cavendish, Margaret Harley (*see* PORTLAND, DUCHESS OF)
Cavendish, Sir Charles, accompanies his brother to France, i., 12; returns to England, 19; his character, *ib.*; generosity to his brother, 26; death, *ib.*
Cavendish, William (*see* NEWCASTLE, DUKE OF)
Chalmers, Dr., his interview with Mrs. Opie, ii., 108
Chapone, Mrs., letter from, describing Mr. Montagu's last illness, i. 244
Charles II., visits the Marquis of Newcastle's riding-school, i., 19; restoration, 27.
Charleville, Lady, urges Mrs. Opie to write a "plain English" novel, ii., 89; presents Mrs. Opie to Lady Sarah Napier, 91; letter to Mrs. Opie on her joining the Society of Friends, 99; distinguished guests at her concert, 138; visits the Prince Regent at the Brighton Pavilion, 142
Charlotte, Queen, note to Mrs. Delany, i., 198; her thoughtful kindness, 203; questions Miss Burney about the "Feast of Reason," 257; her reply to Lady Anne Barnard's present of a necklace, 295
Chesterfield, Lord, letter to his son describing Lady Hervey, i., 100
Chimney Sweeps, the London, annually entertained by Mrs. Montagu on May-Day, i., 259
Chorley, Henry Fothergill, on Lady Morgan's toilette, ii., 135; on her "self-approbation," 145, *note*; anecdotes of her, 154, *note*; on her character in old age, 160; his description of Dr. Mitford, 165; his opinion of Mrs. Browning's letters, 198
Clairmont, Mrs. (*see* GODWIN, MRS.)
Clairmont, Jane (called "Clare"), leaves England with Shelley and Mary Godwin, ii., 222; refuses to return with

her mother, *ib.*; her hysterical fancies, *ib.*, *note*; applies to Byron for an engagement at Drury Lane, 227; introduces Byron to Mary and Shelley, *ib.*; goes to Switzerland with them, *ib.*; goes to Italy with the Shelleys, 231; death of her child, 247; goes to Vienna as a governess, 250; last visit to Mrs. Shelley, 258; death, 259.

Clanricarde, Lord, conversation with Lady Morgan, ii., 153; compares Daniel O'Connell to "an extinct volcano," *ib.*

Clarence, the Duke of (afterwards William IV.), calls on Horace Walpole, i., 320; his dinner to the Prince of Orange, 327

Clarke, Dr., accused of heresy, i., 61; describes "The Earl of Derwentwater's Lights," 67

Clarke, Sir Arthur, his talents and appearance, ii., 126; letter to, from Lady Morgan, 133

Clarke, Lady (*see* OWENSON, OLIVIA), described by Prince Pucklau Muskau, ii., 151; her daughters, *ib.*; her death, 159

Clavering of Callalee, brought to London as a prisoner, i., 64

Clavering, John, i., 49.

Clavering, Molly, birth of, i., 48 (*see* COWPER, COUNTESS)

Clipston Park, destruction of, i., 29

Coke, Lady Mary, "fancies herself" Duchess of York, i., 325, *note*

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, cuts a compliment to Scott out of one of Miss Mitford's early poems, ii., 174; his lectures, 174–175; scoffs at Campbell, 175; recites his "Ancient Mariner" at Godwin's house, 214

Congreve, William, the dramatist, recommended to the Prince of Wales by Lady Cowper, i., 62; acquainted with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 136

Constable, Archibald, Mrs. Inchbald's Memoirs offered to, by Godwin, ii., 2; story of Mrs. Inchbald's marriage told by, 8

Constable, Thomas, his recollections of Mrs. Opie, ii., 103

Cork and Orrery, the Countess of, her note to Mrs. Inchbald, ii., 39; amusing scene at one of her parties, 92; letter to Mrs. Opie on her becoming a Quakeress, 98; last letter to Mrs. Opie, 109; gives a party to meet "the Wild Irish

Girl," 122; her "dun-ducketty mud-coloured" parties, 138; "not known in the trade," *ib.*, *note*

Cosway, Mrs., presents Mrs. Damer and Mary and Agnes Berry to Letitia Bonaparte, i., 332; at Kensington House, ii., 54; takes Mr. and Mrs. Opie to the house of Madame Letitia Bonaparte, 82; her conversation with Cardinal Fesch, *ib.*

Coventry, Countess of (Maria Gunning), described by Mrs. Delany, i., 190

Cowper, Countess (*see* CLAVERING, MOLLY), diary of, i., 47; portrait of, 48; strange mistake of Voltaire respecting, 53; secret marriage, 55; talent for music, 57; at the coronation of George I., *ib.*; made Lady of the Bedchamber, 59; compliment to the King, 60; refuses to play for high stakes, 61; defends Dr. Clarke, *ib.*; recommends Congreve to the Prince of Wales, 62; her Jacobite connections, 63, 64; offers to accompany her husband into retirement, 65; sees "Lord Derwentwater's Lights," 67; tells an absurd ghost story, 69; describes the reconciliation of the Royal Family, 73; at the Drawing Room, 74; on Caroline, Princess of Wales, 76; her reply to the Princess, 77; burns many of her papers, *ib.*; grief for the loss of her husband, 78; death, *ib.*

Cowper, Earl, first marriage, i., 49; nicknamed "Bigamy Will," 53; made Lord Keeper by Queen Anne, 54; second marriage, 55; letter to his bride, *ib.*; interview with Lady Harriet Vere, 57; receives the Great Seal a second time, 58; his reforms, 64; made High Steward, 65; resignation of the Great Seal, 71; "the only disinterested man in the kingdom," 72; refuses to resume office, 74; suspected of joining in Jacobite plots, 77; death, 78

Cowper, Spencer, barrister, i., 49; his marriage, *ib.*; at Hertford, 50; accused of the murder of Sarah Stout, 51; acquitted, 52; member for Truro, *ib.*; death, 54; monument to, *ib.*

Cowper, William, the poet, i., 54; his opinion of Mrs. Montagu's "Essay on Shakespeare," 238; lines on her "feather-room," 258

Cowper, Sir William, father of the Lord Chancellor, i., 49
Cowper, William (*see* COWPER, EARL)
Craggs, Mr. Secretary, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, i., 122
Croker, John Wilson, on Mrs. Montagu's "Essay on Shakepeare," i., 239; alleged cause of his bitter attacks on Lady Morgan, ii., 122
Cumberland, Richard, satirizes Mrs. Montagu in the *Observer*, i., 257

D'Aiguillon, Duc, letter from, to Amelia Anderson, ii., 70
D'Albany, Madame (wife of Prince Charles Edward), i., 342; visits Lady Morgan, ii., 143
Dalrymple, Miss, afterwards Countess of Balcarres, i., 266; her prophecy fulfilled, 267; her character, *ib.*; refuses Lord Balcarres, 268; relents on hearing of his generosity, *ib.* (*see* BALCARRES, COUNTESS OF)
Damer, Mrs., a favourite friend of Horace Walpole and the Berrys, i., 321; sends a grove of lavender plants to "Little Strawberry," 325; presented to the First Consul, 333
David, Jean Pierre, takes a medallion of Mrs. Opie, ii., 100
De Genlis, Madame, visited by Mrs. Opie, ii., 102; her description of Lady Morgan, 154
Delany, Dr. Patrick, Chancellor of St. Patrick's, character of, i., 178; marries Mrs. Pendarves, 184; made Dean of Down, 185; lawsuit with first wife's family, 188; calm and resigned death, 193
Delany, Mrs. (*see* GRANVILLE, MARY, and PENDARVES, MRS.) her second marriage, i., 184; goes to Delville, 185; life, there, 186; death of her mother, Mrs. Granville, 187; accompanies Dr. Delany to Bath, 193; his death there, *ib.*; goes to Bulstrode, *ib.*; visits Garrick, 194; "a frolicsome old gentlewoman," 195; presented to George III. and his Queen at Bulstrode, 196; her "Flora" described, *ib.*, *note*; visits "the Queen's House," 197; settled at Windsor, 199; tells stories of her early days to the King and Queen, 200; her last illness, 203; death, *ib.*; place of burial, and epitaph, 204

Devonshire, the Duke of, takes Miss Mitford a noticeable bouquet, ii., 192
Dewes, Mary, niece of Mrs. Delany, corresponds with Rousseau, i., 192; marries Mr. Port of Ilam, 194
Donegal, Lady, letter to Tom Moore, i., 336
Doran, Dr., on Mrs. Montagu's "Dialogues," i., 235; his "Lady of the Last Century," 236; on Mrs. Montagu's "Essay on Shakespeare," 238; on Cumberland's "Feast of Reason," 257; character of Mrs. Montagu by, 262
Drury Lane Theatre, burning of, ii., 45
Dudley and Ward, Lord, ii., 93
Duff Gordon, Lady (*see* AUSTIN, LUCIE), settles in Queen Square, ii., 272; literary work, *ib.*; life at Weybridge, 273; removal to Esher, *ib.*; her Nubian servant, 274; residence in Paris, 275; visits to Heine, *ib.*; failing health, 277; ordered to the Cape, *ib.*; first experiences of Cape Town, 278; meeting with "the last Hottentot," 280; return to England, 281; visit to Eaux Bonnes, 282; goes to Egypt, 283; her maid, *ib.*; lands at Alexandria, 284; her attendant Omar, *ib.*; impressions of Cairo, *ib.*; passage up the Nile, 285; letter on the death of Lord Lansdowne, 287; death of her father, *ib.*; brief visit to England, *ib.*; return to Egypt, *ib.*; her daughter Janet (Mrs. Ross), 288; goodness to the natives, 289; panorama of Eastern life, 290; Nubian children, 291; visit from Sir Alexander Duff Gordon, 293; her household, *ib.*; social equality in the East, 294; visit from her son, 297; her last Christmas Day, 299; letter to her husband, *ib.*; description of, by Dr. W. H. Russell, 301; visit from the Prince and Princess of Wales, 303; death, *ib.*; her house described by Mr. Eden, 304; reverence for her memory, 305

Edinburgh, Lady Hervey on, i., 103
Eleanora, Empress-Mother (of Austria), i., 124
Elizabeth, Empress (of Austria), i., 124
Elizabeth, Queen, exiles Sir Thomas Lucas, i., 4
Elford, Sir William, invited by Mrs. Opie to meet Lord Herbert Stuart, ii., 94, *note*; correspondence with Miss Mitford, 174–184

Evelyn, John, on the Duchess of Newcastle, i., 33, 34

Feather-Room, Mrs. Montagu's, Cowper's lines on, i., 258
Fesch, Cardinal, described by Mrs. Opie, ii., 82
Festino at Naples, the, ballet at, i., 312
Finch, Heneage, Earl of Nottingham, his mode of accepting bribes, i., 65
Fontenelle, Bernard de, at ninety-two, i., 101
Fordyce, Lady Margaret (*see* LINDSAY, LADY MARGARET), her second marriage, i., 279; her translations, 280, *note*; revisits the old home in Fifeshire, 301; death, 303, *note*
Foster, Lady Elizabeth (afterwards Duchess of Devonshire), like the Empress Josephine, i., 333; meets Mrs. Inchbald, ii., 40
Fox, Charles James, in Paris, ii., 80; his personal appearance disenchants Miss Mitford, 169
Frederick the Great, Lady Hervey on, i., 103
Friends, the choice of, Mrs. Montagu on, i., 260

Gardening, Lady Hervey's delight in, i., 91; adopted as a pursuit by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 152; at Delville, 185; Lady Anne Barnard's knowledge of, 300; Mary Berry's love of, 330, 334; Lady Charlotte Lindsay's supposed ignorance of, 345
Garrick, David, i., 193; his wife, *ib.*, *note*; his house and garden, 194; his recitations at Mrs. Montagu's assemblies, 226
Gay, John, lines on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, i., 143
Genlis, Madame de, on Lady Morgan, ii., 153
George I., coronation of, i., 58–59; pleasure at Lady Cowper's compliment, 60; why he looked ill, 73; his Turkish attendants, 75; "an honest blockhead," 121; interview with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 122, 123
George III., accession of, i., 104; his character as a child, *ib.*; kindness to Mrs. Delany, 197; "overseer" of her house, 198; refused admittance by Miss Port, 199; rebuked by the Earl of Balcarres for attempting to introduce Arnold to him, 277; commands Mrs. Inchbald's comedy *Such Things Are*, ii., 28

George IV., friendship for Lady Anne Lindsay when Prince of Wales, i., 286; resentment against Mary Berry, 337; kindness to Lady Charleville, ii., 142; praise of "Florence Macarthy," *ib.*; opinion of Croker, *ib.*; personal appearance, *ib.*, *note*

Ghost of Sarah Stout, the, i., 53

Ghost Story, an absurd, i., 68

Gloucester Cathedral, Mrs. Granville buried within the precincts of, i., 187

Gloucester, the Duchess of, approves the purchase of "Little Strawberry," i., 324

Gloucester, the Duke of, his portrait the last painted by Opie, ii., 87; meets Mrs. Opie at Freemason's Tavern, 99

Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, her parents, ii., 207-210; her birth, 210; childhood, 213; her character described by her father, 215; visit to Scotland, 216; delight in fine scenery, *ib.*; first sight of Shelley, 217; meetings with him by her mother's grave, 219; leaves Skinner Street, accompanied by Jane Clairmont, *ib.*; tour through France, 222; writes "Frankenstein," 227; marriage, 229 (*see* SHELLEY, MRS.)

Godwin, Mrs., her character, ii., 213; her children, *ib.*; persuades Godwin to embark in publishing, 216; follows the fugitives to Calais, 221; present at Shelley's second marriage, 229

Godwin, William, describes Mrs. Inchbald, ii., 1; criticizes her "Simple Story," 31; hurt by Mrs. Inchbald's conduct on his marriage, 37; coolness between them after Mrs. Godwin's death, *ib.*; he makes overtures towards a reconciliation, 38; his tragedy of *Antonio*, 39; his "Caleb Williams," *ib.*; his admiration for Amelia Alderson, 67; jealousy of Holcroft, *ib.*; described by Southey, 207; early life, 208; first marriage, 210; death of his wife, *ib.*; kindness to her children, *ib.*; second marriage, 212; describes Fanny and Mary, 215; becomes a publisher, 216; continual embarrassments, 228; reconciliation with the Shelleys, 229; death, 256

Gordon, Duchess of, preparing for a party, ii., 124

Grange, Lord, carries Lady Mar to Scotland by force, i., 139; his treatment of his wife, *ib.*, *note*
Granville, Ann, curious as to Mrs. Pendarves's admirers, i., 173; marries Mr. Dewes, 183; death of, 191
Granville, Mary, her birth and family, i., 164; her cousin Kitty, 165; resolves to play "as well as Mr. Handel," *ib.*; leaves London unwillingly for the country, 166; first love, 167; meets Mr. Pendarves at Longleat, *ib.*; their marriage, 168 (*see* PENDARVES, MRS.)
Gray, Thomas, impression made on Edinburgh society by, i., 237; Mrs. Montagu threatens to make him unbend, *ib.*
Grenville, Lady Hester, her marriage to Mr. Pitt, i., 231
Grote, Mrs., friend of Lucie Austin, ii., 267; letter to Nassau Senior, 273
Guizot, François, described by Mrs. Opie, ii., 111
Gurney, J. J., letters from, to Mrs. Opie, ii., 95, 96
Gurney, John, death of, ii., 96
Gurneys and Frys, the, youth of, ii., 96, *note*
Gustavus III. of Sweden, travels with the Berrys, i., 311

Hall, Mrs. S. C., her description of Lady Morgan, ii., 157; of Miss Mitford, 187; of her astonishing headdress, 188, *note*
Hall, Samuel Carter, on Mrs. Opie's singing, ii., 76; describes her in his "Book of Memories," 105
Hampton Court, Maids of Honour at, i., 80; society at, 89; "half-way to Switzerland," 315
Handel, at Whitehall, i., 165; at Mrs. Pendarves's musical afternoons, 181
Hardwicke, Countess of (*see* LINDSAY, LADY ELIZABETH)
Haunted houses, the worst, i., 256
Haydon, Benjamin Robert, his painting of "The Meeting of the Anti-Slavery Convention," ii., 110; admiration for Mrs. Opie, *ib.*; his portrait of Miss Mitford, 188; letter to, from her, 192; misunderstanding with her, 199; his tragic death, *ib.*
Heine, Heinrich, and Lucie Austin, ii., 266; meets her again, 275; her last interview with, *ib.*; Lady Duff Gordon's recollections of the poet, 276

Hervey, Frederick (*afterwards Bishop of Derry*), i., 92
Hervey, Lady Barbara, "queen of a ball," i., 86
Hervey, Lady (*see* LEPELL, MOLLY), married life, i., 84; description of, by Lady Louisa Stuart, 85; at Bath, 86; her mother-in-law, 87, 90; at Ickworth, 88; nurses her sister-in-law, 89; correspondence with the Rev. Edmund Morris, 90; loss of her husband, 91; on patriotic pessimists, 93; on gardening, 94; rebuilding her house in the Green Park, 95; "Who are the ancients?" *ib.*; on her grandson, 96; on the family of the Prince of Wales, 97; on religious ceremonies, 98; life at Ickworth, *ib.*; the view from her windows, 99; visits France, 100; description of, by Lord Chesterfield, *ib.*; describes Fontenelle, 101; visits Scotland, 102; last letter to Mr. Morris, 105; death, *ib.*; Horace Walpole on her death, *ib.*; on Lord Bristol's disposal of her house, 106
Hervey, Lord, personal appearance of, i., 83; satirized by Pope as "Sporus," *ib.*; Queen Caroline's affection for, *ib.*; marriage to Molly Lepell, *ib.*; journey to Italy, 88; death, 91
Hofland, Mrs., on the ways of the Wordsworths, ii., 178; letter to, 182; on Macready's qualified praise of *Rienzi*, 187
Hogarth, William, promises to teach Mrs. Pendarves his method of painting, i., 177
Holcroft, Thomas, his strange career, ii., 30; committed to Newgate for high treason, 31; visited by Mrs. Inchbald, *ib.*; Amelia Alderson said to be in love with, 67
Howard, John, introduced as "Haswell" in Mrs. Inchbald's play *Such Things Are*, ii., 28; curious coincidence concerning, *ib.*
Howard, Mrs. (*afterwards Countess of Suffolk*), describes society at Hampton Court, i., 89
Hood, Admiral, and his wife, i., 232
Horne, R. H., his correspondence with Mrs. Browning, ii., 198; visits to Miss Mitford, *ib.*; his "determined picturesqueness," *ib.*; a short romance, 199
Houghton, Lord (Monckton Milnes), description of Agnes Berry by, i., 349; at Mary Berry's funeral, 352; poem

by, 353–354; publishes Lady Duff Gordon's recollections of Heine, ii., 276

Hume, David, joins in the Christmas games at Balcarres, i., 273; letter from, to Lord Balcarres, on his "History of England," *ib.*, *note*

Inchbald, George, a favourite with his stepmother, ii., 19; constantly calls on her for assistance, 28

Inchbald, Mr., first acquaintance with Elizabeth Simpson, ii., 5; refused by her, *ib.*; proposes a second time and is accepted, 8; various provincial engagements of, 9–11; cause of a riot in the Edinburgh theatre, 11; thinks of becoming a miniature painter in Paris, *ib.*; Mrs. Inchbald tears up his copy of Garrick's portrait, 16; his death, 18

Inchbald, Mrs. (*see* SIMPSON, ELIZABETH), her *début* as Cordelia to her husband's Lear at Bristol, ii., 9; parts played by her, *ib.*; travelling experiences, 10; "made up" for Zaphira, 11; visits France, *ib.*; forms a friendship with Mrs. Siddons and her brother, 12; her studies, 13; her religious impressions, 15, and *note*; the players ordered by the magistrates of York to quit the town, 16; in great difficulties, *ib.*; sends money to her mother and sister, *ib.*; letter from Kemble, 17; grief at the death of her husband, 18; procures an engagement for her stepson in the same company as herself, 19; receives an offer from Suett the comedian, *ib.*; supposed to be about to marry Kemble, *ib.*; her admiration for him, 20; her theatrical salary, *ib.*; finishes her "Simple Story," 21; appears at Covent Garden as Bellario, *ib.*; in London lodgings, 22; goes to a masquerade with Lord Carmarthen, *ib.*; sells a farce to Colman, 23; "devoted to virtue and a garret," 24; sells a comedy to Colman, *ib.*; invests in the Three Per Cents., *ib.*; mode of spending her Sundays, 25; new friends, *ib.*; refuses Mr. Glover, 26; infatuation for Sir Charles Bunbury, *ib.*; friendship with his second wife, 27; her stepson's difficulties, 28; produces *The Widow's Vow*, *ib.*; introduces Howard, the philanthropist, in her play of *Such Things Are*, *ib.*; admiration for Dr. Warren, 30; kindness to Thomas Holcroft, 31; success

of her "Simple Story," 32; goes to live in Leicester Fields, *ib.;* her ungracious landlady, 33; character of, by Mrs. Shelley, *ib.;* her comedy, *The Wedding Day*, purchased by Sheridan, 34; her next play attacked in the *True Briton* for containing seditious sentiments, *ib.;* publishes "Nature and Art," 35; death of her sister Debby, *ib.;* of her brother George, *ib.;* visits Stanmore Priory with Mrs. Kemble, 36; admired by the Marquis of Abercorn, *ib.;* her want of sympathy with Godwin on the death of his wife, 37; refuses to be reconciled to him, 38; invited to dinner by Lady Cork, 39; appears as a "Blue Stocking" at a masquerade, 40; a new Cinderella, 41; "a wooden supper," *ib.;* residence in Annandale House, 42; moves to the Strand, *ib.;* "hates prodigies," 43; letter to Rogers, *ib.;* thinks of buying a farm, 44; asked to contribute to the *Quarterly Review*, 45; describes the burning of Drury Lane Theatre, *ib.;* death of her sister Dolly, *ib.;* retires from the world, 46; letter to Mrs. Opie, *ib.*, *note;* corresponds with Maria Edgeworth and her father, 47; letter to Mr. Phillips about the Moore family, *ib.;* letters to, from Charles Moore, 48–49; her lodgings in a state of siege, 50; removal to Kensington, 51; death of her sister Mrs. Hunt, 53; describes the residents in her Kensington boarding-house, 54; friendship with Mr. and Mrs. Cosway, *ib.;* letter to Mrs. Opie, 55, 57; last meeting with Kemble, 56; last illness, 57; burial in Kensington Church, *ib.;* her will, *ib.*

Influenza, epidemic of, i., 247

Isleworth, Sheridan's house at, i., 320

Jacobite prisoners, entry into London, i., 64

Jacobite rising, alarm of, i., 120

Jeffrey, Lord, letter to Mary Berry from, i., 350; flirtation with Lady Morgan, ii., 136; friendship for Mrs. Austin, 270

Johnson, Dr. Samuel, repeats Burke's description of Mrs. Delany, i., 195; his opinion of Mrs. Montagu's "Essay on Shakespeare," 238; his praise of her character and conversation, 239; urges Fanny Burney to "attack" Mrs.

Montagu, 249; his "Life of Lord Lyttelton," 252; annoyed by Mrs. Montagu's coolness, 253
Johnstone, Sophy, her singular education, i., 272
Jonson, Ben, writes two masques for the Earl of Newcastle, i., 11
Jordan, Mrs., acting at Richmond Theatre, i., 327

Kean, Edmund, "disgusts" Miss Mitford, ii., 176
Keith, Anne Murray (Scott's "Mrs. Bethune Baliol"), identifies "the author of Waverley," i., 271
Kemble, Charles, family likeness of, ii., 68; death of, 161
Kemble, Fanny, description of Mrs. Inchbald, ii., 12; visit to Mrs. Opie, 112; Talfourd on her acting, 192
Kemble, John Philip, carries off Lamb's copy of the Duchess of Newcastle's "Sociable Letters," i., 25; plays at "hide-and-seek" on Russell Moor, ii., 14; letter to Mrs. Inchbald, 16; his tragedy of *Belisarius* refused by Harris, 17; his epitaph on Mr. Inchbald, 18; supposed prototype of "Dorriforth" in the "Simple Story," 22; letter of congratulation to Mrs. Inchbald on her successful farce, 24; takes Talma to visit Mrs. Inchbald, 52; farewell visit to Mrs. Inchbald, 55; mentioned by Mrs. Opie, 68; curious scene with Sydney Owenson at Lady Cork's assembly, 123; a guest of the Marquis of Abercorn, 129
Kennett, Dr., his portrait painted as Judas Iscariot, i., 68
Kensington Palace, the Princess of Wales at, i., 336
Kingston, Lord, i., 114; dies of small-pox, 117
Kingston, Duchess of, "seeing company" after the Duke's funeral, i., 137, *note*
Kingston, Duchess of (formerly Miss Chudleigh), and Captain Harvey, i., 195
Kosciusko, Thaddeus, described by Mrs. Opie, ii., 83; asks her to write some verses on him, *ib.*
Krudener, Madame, at the Congress of Vienna, ii., 140

"*Lady Anne and Lady Jane*," story by Mrs. Opie, ii., 105
La Fayette, Marquis de, described by Mrs. Opie, ii., 100; ridiculed by Miss Mitford, *ib.*, *note*; the hero of Casimir

de la Vigne's national song, 102 ; visited by Lady Morgan, 139

Lamb, Charles, on the Duchess of Newcastle's "Sociable Letters," i., 25 ; on the "Life of the Duke of Newcastle,' 46 ; at Godwin's house, ii., 214

Lamb, Lady Caroline, personates Marshal Blucher, ii., 91 ; at the Duchess of Gordon's rout, 124 ; "Mad as a March hare," 166

Language, the limitations of, a suggestion of immortality, i., 234

Lansdown, Lord, sent to the Tower, i., 165 ; marries his niece to Mr. Pendarves, 168 ; hypocritical letter to her, 169

Laurence, Mrs. (Sydney Clarke), letter from, describing the burning of the Royal Exchange, ii., 158

Lawrence, Sir Thomas, his portrait of Sydney Owenson, ii., 128, 129

Lee, Harriet, her comment on Godwin's letters, ii., 211

Leigh Hunt, James Henry, on the Duchess of Newcastle, i., 37 ; on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 119, 140 ; on Elizabeth Carter, 233 ; on Mrs. Inchbald's "Nature and Art," ii., 35 ; letters to, from Mrs. Shelley, 236–245 ; goes to Italy at the suggestion of Byron, 247

Lepell, Molly, walks by moonlight with Pope, i., 81 ; Maid of Honour at fourteen, 82 ; birthplace, *ib.* ; at Twickenham, *ib.* ; private marriage, 82 (*see* HERVEY, LADY),

Lewis, Matthew Gregory ("Monk Lewis"), bon-mot of, ii., 41

Lewis, Lady Theresa, on Walpole's letters to Mary and Agnes Berry, i., 313 ; edits the "Journals and Correspondence of Mary Berry," 316

Lindsay, Lady Anne, her birth, i., 264 ; amusements of childhood, 269 ; her studies in the little "staircase-room" at Balcarres, 280 ; writes "Auld Robin Gray," *ib.* ; detected by Lady Jane Scott, 281 ; correspondence with Sir Walter Scott, *ib.* ; living in London with her sister Margaret, 286 ; interview with the Prince of Wales, *ib.* ; letter to Edmund Burke, *ib.*, *note* ; marriage, 287 (*see* BARNARD, LADY ANNE)

Lindsay, Lady Charlotte (daughter of the Earl of Guildford), in the household of Caroline, Princess of Wales, i., 284; friend of Mary and Agnes Berry, *ib.*; her death, 351
Lindsay, Lady Elizabeth, Lord Balcarres' letters to, i., 264; her replies, 265; death of, 266
Lindsay, Lady Elizabeth (afterwards Countess of Hardwicke), advises Lady Anne to "lift the cow," i., 280; her family, 285; her son drowned, *ib.*; her death at ninety-five, 286
Lindsay, Lady Margaret, incites her brothers and sisters to run away, i., 269; her portrait drawn by her sister, 278–279; her unfortunate marriage, 279 (*see* FORDYCE, LADY MARGARET)
Lindsay, the Hon. Charles, called "the darlin' Lord Bishop" of Kildare, i., 285
Lindsay, the Hon. Colin, called "Don Quixote," i., 283; how he settled a duel, *ib.*
Lindsay, the Hon. James, as a child, i., 276; in the French hospital at Cuddalore, 284; death, 285
Lindsay, the Hon. John, a little philosopher, i., 276; his captivity at Conjeveram, 283; narrative of his imprisonment, 284; marriage to the daughter of the Earl of Guildford, *ib.*
Lindsay, the Hon. Robert, his career in India, i., 288; return to Fifeshire, *ib.*
Lindsay, Sir David of the Mount, i., 264
Linet, Mr., strange death of, i., 67
"*Little Strawberry*," or *Cliveden*, bought by Walpole for the Berrys, i., 323
Llanover, Lady, her description of Mrs. Delany's "Flora," i., 196, *note*; her correction of Fanny Burney's statements, 202
"*Lord Derwentwater's Lights*," i., 66
Louis Philippe and his family at Fontainebleau, i., 344
Lucas, Lady, i., 4; management of her children, 5; character of, 8; losses during the Civil War, *ib.*
Lucas, Lord, i., 13, 15, 20
Lucas, Margaret, birth of, i., 3; her brothers and sisters, 4, 5; her education, 5; becomes Maid of Honour, 8; unhappy at Court, 9; accompanies the Queen to France, 10;

marriage, 13 (*see* NEWCASTLE, MARGARET, DUCHESS OF)
Lucas, Mr., his portrait of Miss Mitford, ii., 189
Lucas, Sir Charles, death of, i., 17
Lyttelton, Lord, letter to Mrs. Montagu about his son, i., 232; on the care of her eyesight, *ib.*; his "Dialogues of the Dead," 235

Macartney, Earl of, his many diplomatic appointments, i., 287, 288; supposed coldness of disposition, 288; goes to the Cape as first English Governor, *ib.*; excellence of his administration, 301; leaves the Cape, *ib.*
Mackintosh, Sir James, on the literary circles of Norwich, ii., 59; on Mrs. Opie's memoir of her husband, 88, *note*; "philosophic dinner" at his house, 92; character of, by Mrs. Opie, 106
Macready, William, on Miss Mitford's "Julian," ii., 186; on *Rienzi*, 187
Maids of Honour, the, at Hampton Court, i., 80
Mar, Countess of, in Paris, i., 134; becomes insane, 138; carried off to Scotland by her brother-in-law, 139; placed under the care of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *ib.*; temporarily recovers her reason, *ib.*; transferred to the care of her daughter Lady Frances Erskine, 143
Mar, Earl of, called "Bobbing John," i., 134
Marie Amélie, Queen of the French, receives Mary and Agnes Berry at Fontainebleau, i., 343; receives Mrs. Opie, ii., 103; Mrs. Opie visits her at Claremont, 111
Marlborough, Sarah, Duchess of, on Lord Cowper's appointment, i., 54
Martineau, Harriet, on the Berrys and Horace Walpole, i., 306; obituary notice of Mary Berry, 357; on the literary circles of Norwich, ii., 59; her opinion of Dr. Alderson, 60; her account of Mrs. Opie's method of composition, 85; her description of the Frys and Gurneys when young, 96; story of Mrs. Austin and Lord Jeffrey, 270
Middleton, Dr. Conyers, his mode of educating Elizabeth Robinson, i., 206; his congratulations on her marriage, 220
Mill, John Stuart, playfellow of Lucie Austin, ii., 264

Mitford, Dr., marries Mary Russell, ii., 164; squanders his wife's fortune, 165; speculates in a lottery, *ib.*; buys an estate at Grasely, 168; abruptly leaves his daughter in Northumberland, 170; made a magistrate, 171; in difficulties again, 173; compelled to leave Bertram House, 183; contempt for his daughter's friends, 191; death, 195

Mitford, Mary Russell, her parentage, ii., 164; birth, *ib.*; early childhood, 165; curious success with a lottery-ticket, *ib.*; sent to school, 166; pen-and-ink portrait of her, *ib.*; recollections of the *émigrés*, 167; leaves school, 168; goes to Northumberland on a round of visits, 169; a strange hairdresser, *ib.*; deserted by her father, 170; publishes her "Miscellaneous Poems," 171; enraged with Valpy the printer, 173; visits London, 175; her health proposed at Freemason's Hall, 176; taken in to dinner by the Duke of Sussex, 177; her lively letters, *ib.*; pen-and-ink portraits of celebrities, 178; letters to Sir William Elford, 174–179; a rustic adorer, *ib.*; removal to Three-Mile-Cross, 183; her hopes for *Foscari*, 186; *Julian* produced at Covent Garden, *ib.*; appearance of "Our Village," *ib.*; of *Rienzi*, 187; interview with Mrs. S. C. Hall, *ib.*; portraits of her, 188–189; letter to Rev. W. Harness, 191; her failing health and spirits, 192; loss of her mother, *ib.*; visit to Talfourd, *ib.*; cast of *Inez de Castro*, *ib.*; other writings, 193; a group of celebrities, 194; meeting with Browning, *ib.*; first interview with Elizabeth Barrett, *ib.*; visit from the Duke of Devonshire, *ib.*; pension granted her by Lord Melbourne, *ib.*; death of her father, *ib.*; letter to Elizabeth Barrett, 196; description of Miss Barrett's conversation and letters, 197; acquaintance with R. H. Horne, 198; marriage of Elizabeth Barrett, 200; goes to London to meet the Brownings, 201; life at Swallowfield, 202; visit from James Payn, 203; letter to Mrs. Browning, 204; description of Charles Kingsley, *ib.*; thrown from her pony-carriage, 205; subscription to pay Dr. Mitford's debts, *ib.*; last visit from Talfourd, 206; death, *ib.*

Mitford, Mrs., her marriage, ii., 164; her indignation with

Coleridge, 172; letter to her husband, 173; her peaceful death, 192

Monmouth, Duchess of, playing at bowls with the Princess of Wales at Windsor, i., 71

Montagu, Dean, described by Lady Bute, i., 110

Montagu, Edward (grandson of the Earl of Sandwich), i., 219; his character described by his wife, 220; member for Huntingdon, 221; death of, 244; "a mathematician to the last," *ib.*

Montagu, Anne Wortley, a friend of Lady Mary Pierrepont, i., 110; her death, 111

Montagu, Edward Wortley, first meeting with Lady Mary Pierrepont, i., 110; his classical studies, *ib.*; his literary friends, 111; his correspondence with Lady Mary Pierrepont, 112; his marriage, 115; member for Westminster and Lord of the Treasury, 121; made Ambassador to the Porte, 123; recalled, 132; endorses Rémond's letters, 135; intends to join his wife abroad, 144; letter to her, *ib.*; desires her to treat with their son, 146; writes of their daughter, 153; death of, 157

Montagu, Edward Wortley, Junior, runs away from school to college, i., 138; again disappears, *ib.*; contracts a Fleet marriage with a laundress, 143; described by his mother, 146; his changes of religion, 147; character of, by Mrs. Montagu, *ib.*, *note*

Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley (*see* PIERREPONT, LADY MARY), her letters to her husband, i., 115–117; death of her brother, 117; character of, 119; takes refuge in Castle Howard, 120; advice to her husband, *ib.*; begins her travels, 123; at Rotterdam, *ib.*; her "Letters from the East," *ib.*; the Viennese flats, 124; the two Empresses, *ib.*; Hanoverian beauty, 125; on government at Adrianople, *ib.*; her Turkish costume, 126; letter to Pope, *ib.*; inoculation parties, 127; her "Town Eclogues," *ib.*; slightly marked by small-pox, 128; describes the Turkish beauties, 129; conversation with Fatima, 130; proceeds to Constantinople, *ib.*; description of the city, 131; ill of fever at Lyons, 132; letter to the Abbé Conti, 133; becomes acquainted with Rémond, 133; places Rémond's letters in the hands

of Mr. Wortley, 135; resides at Twickenham, 136; death of her father, 137; first troubles with her son, 138; reported ill-treatment of her sister, 139; quarrel with Pope, 139-142; her parody on Pope's poem on the rustic lovers, 140; Pope's letters to her, 142; resumes her travels, 143; at Venice, 145; her kindness to the English visitors in Rome, *ib.*; meeting with her son, 146; intercedes for the Huguenots, 147; on the death of Pope, 149; leaves Avignon, *ib.*; residence in Brescia, 150; life at Lovere, 151-154; criticism of Fielding's novels, 154; return to England, 159; last letter to her son, *ib.*; visited by Horace Walpole, 160; by Mrs. Montagu, 161; her death, *ib.*

Montagu, Mary Wortley, birth, i., 131; marriage to the Earl of Bute, 143 (*see* BUTE, COUNTESS OF)

Montagu, Matthew (nephew and heir of Mrs. Montagu), his marriage, i., 261; his disposition, *ib.*; and Matthew Montagu, *ib.*, *note*

Montagu, Mrs. (*see* ROBINSON, ELIZABETH), letter to the Duchess of Portland describing her wedding, i., 219; account of her home at Allerthorpe, 221; country habits, *ib.*; death of her infant son, 222; at Tunbridge Wells, 223; plays Dr. Young a trick, 224; her "Conversation Parties," *ib.*; her literary breakfasts, 225; admiration excited by her letters, 228; death of her mother, 229; and her second brother, *ib.*; letter to her husband, *ib.*; her masquerade dress, 230; her first appearance in print, 235; on the trial of Lord Ferrers, 236; visits Scotland, 237; her "Essay on Shakespeare," *ib.*; various opinions on, 238; settles a pension on Mrs. Williams, 239; letter from Denton Castle, 240; description of her *protégé*, "the philosopher," 241; visit to Stowe, *ib.*; to Edmund Burke, 242; on newspaper gossip, *ib.*; dines with Mrs. Delany, 243; distress of Mrs. Montagu during her husband's last illness, 244; desires his conversion, *ib.*; visit to her northern estates, 245; goes to Paris, 246; repartee respecting Voltaire, *ib.*; ill at Canterbury, 247; death of her brother, 248; visit to Streatham, 251; described by Fanny Burney, *ib.*; compliments her on "Evelina," 252; hurt and offended by Dr. Johnson's life of Lord Lyttelton, *ib.*;

makes "payment in full" for her house in Portman Square, 256; satirized as "Vanessa" by Cumberland, 257; entertains the London chimney-sweeps on May-Day, 259; her house at Sandleford, *ib.*; fire there, 260; family happiness, 261; failing powers, 262; death, *ib.*; character of, *ib.*

Montagu, Sidney, described by Lady Bute, i., 110

Moore, Charles, his pen-and-ink portrait of Mrs. Inchbald, ii., 37; becomes insane, 48; his love for his mother, *ib.*; his letters to Mrs. Inchbald, 48–49; character of his brother, 49

Moore, Sir John, death of, ii., 47

Moore, Thomas, letter to, from Lady Donegal, i., 336; describes a conversation with Mary Berry, 345; early acquaintance with the Owensons, ii., 119; meets Lady Morgan in Florence, 143; a dinner-party improvised for him, *ib.*, *note*; his last days, 161

Moravian Fathers, their settlement at the Cape visited by Lady Anne Barnard, 299; their Hottentot pupils, *ib.*

More, Hannah, her ballad, "Bonner's Ghost," printed at the Strawberry Hill Press, i., 317; Lady Cork on Gainsborough's portrait of, ii., 109; "flirting with Garrick," *ib.*

Morgan, Dr. (afterwards Sir Charles Morgan), his first meeting with Sydney Owenson, ii., 129; an early advocate of vaccination, 130, *note*; his love-letters, 131; his marriage, 132; his equipage and mode of driving, 148; his wife's opinion of his conversation, 155; his conduct on an alarm of cholera, *ib.*; loses his Government appointment, 156; leaves Dublin, *ib.*; drives Lady Morgan to Richmond, 159; his death, *ib.*

Morgan, Lady (*see* OWENSON, SYDNEY), happy in her marriage, ii., 133; death of her father, *ib.*; leaves Lady Abercorn and settles in Dublin, 134; publishes "O'Donnel," *ib.*; her appearance at the Vice-regal Drawing Room, 135; at the Dublin Theatre, *ib.*; at Lady Stepney's reception, *ib.*; visits France, and publishes her first work on that country, 136; effect produced by her book, *ib.*; purchase of "Florence Macarthy" by Colburn, 137; present of an

amethyst *parure*, *ib.*; at Lady Cork's parties, 138; an evening at Lady Charleville's, *ib.*; her visit to La Grange, 139; the false Lady Morgan, *ib.*; Parisian society, 141; made a Freemason, *ib.*; letter from Lady Charleville, 142; visits Italy, 143; conversation with Moore, *ib.*; character of the Countess d'Albany, *ib.*; complimented by Princess Borghese, *ib.*; anecdote of her, *ib.*, *note*; meets Pasta and Taglioni, 145; Paganini tells her his history, *ib.*; a dinner with the Archbishop of Taranto, 146; publishes the "Life and Times of Salvator Rosa," *ib.*; second book on France, 147; quarrel with Colburn, *ib.*; "Lady Morgan at half-price," *ib.*; reconciliation, 148; return to Kildare Street, *ib.*; visit of Prince Pucklau Muskau, 149; his account of her, 150; her dread of his calling Sir Charles Morgan out, 152; meeting with O'Connell, 153 and *note*; Madame de Genlis on Lady Morgan, 154; her London circle, 156; literary work, 157; death of her niece Olivia, 158; Sir Charles Morgan's remonstrance on her excessive grief, 159; her last drive with him, *ib.*; his death, *ib.*; her deep grief, *ib.*; death of her sister, *ib.*; returns to society, 160; controversy with Cardinal Wiseman, *ib.*; loss of friends, 161; her last birthday, *ib.*; at work on her "Odd Volume," *ib.*; death, *ib.*; burial in Brompton cemetery, *ib.*

Morley, Lady, letter to Mary Berry, i., 350

Morris, the Rev. Edmund, tutor to the sons of Lord Hervey, i., 90; Lady Hervey's letters to, *ib.*

Moy Thomas, Mr., on Pope's letters to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, i., 141

Murray, John, and his "Domestic Cookery," ii., 158

Napier, Lady Sarah, her unfortunate first marriage, i., 26; Horace Walpole on, *ib.*, *note*; Mrs. Opie sings to her, ii., 91; at Lady Charleville's concert, 138

Napoleon, Prince Louis (afterwards Emperor of the French), visits the Duff Gordons, ii., 274

"*Nature and Art*," Mrs. Inchbald's second novel, published, ii. 35; praised by Leigh Hunt, *ib.*; by Samuel Rogers, 43

Newcastle, Margaret, Duchess of (*see* LUCAS, MARGARET),

called "Mad Madge," i., 1; description of her husband, 13; early married life, 14; accompanies her husband to Holland, 16; reception in Spain, *ib.*; arrival at Antwerp, 17; goes to England, 19; her claim on her husband's estate disallowed by the Sequestration Committee, 20; at Goldsmiths' Hall, *ib.*; her bashfulness, 21; life in England, 22; her "Sociable Letters," *ib.*; return to the Continent, 26; left in Antwerp "as a pawn," 27; joins her husband in England, *ib.*; on the Duke's character, 30; her life of the Duke, 32, 46; reception of John Evelyn, 33; at the Royal Society, 34; described by Pepys, *ib.*; at the theatre, 35; at Welbeck, 37; her method of writing, 38; her romance "A Blazing World," 38–41; her "World's Olio," 41; her poems, 42–43; reason for writing her own life, 44; her death, *ib.*; tomb in Westminster Abbey, 46

Newcastle, William Cavendish, Duke of, birth, i., 10; first marriage, *ib.*; festivities at Welbeck, *ib.*; takes part in the Civil War, 11; quits England, 12; falls in love with Margaret Lucas, 13; second marriage, *ib.*; sends his sons to England, 15; his creditors, 16; takes the house of Rubens' widow at Antwerp, 17; buys Rubens' museum, *ib.*; his training school for horses, 18; visit of the royal family to it, 19; affliction at the death of his brother, 26; returns to England, 27; recovers part of his estates, 28; puts his property in order, 29; some of his sayings, 30; his plays, 31, 35; racecourse at Welbeck, 36; patron of literary men, 37; death, 45; tomb in Westminster Abbey, *ib.*

Noailles, Madame de, her admiration for Garrick, i., 226

Northumberland, the Duchess of, ii., 169

Norwich, literary associations of, ii., 59

O'Connell, Daniel, his manner in society, i., 153; his hard work, *ib.*; "an extinct volcano," *ib.*; his ambition, and extraordinary costume, *ib.*, *note*

O'Hara, General, first meeting with the Berrys, i., 312; at Cheltenham with them, 327; proposes to Mary Berry, 328; appointed Governor of Gibraltar, *ib.*; his engagement to Mary Berry broken off, *ib.*

Opie, John, his portrait of Mrs. Delany, i., 163; his introduction to Amelia Alderson, ii., 71; an "inspired peasant," *ib.*; early life, 42; befriended by Dr. Wolcot, *ib.*; first marriage, 73; devotion to Miss Alderson, *ib.*; simple and frugal habits, 75; love of music, *ib.*; sympathy with his wife's literary pursuits, 77; his conversational powers, 78; love for his mother, *ib.*; his self-depreciation, 80; improved prospects, *ib.*; visit to Paris, *ib.*; with Fox at the Louvre, *ib.*; letter to his wife about Henry Kirke White, 84; completion of his "Lectures on Painting," 86; illness, 87; his portrait of the Duke of Gloucester, *ib.*; death, *ib.*; burial in St. Paul's Cathedral, *ib.*

Opie, Mrs. (*see* ALDERSON, AMELIA), early married life, ii., 74, 75; dancing on her old dancing-master's grave, 76; her literary pursuits, 77; character of her mother-in-law, 79; describes Opie's "fit of tidiness" to Mrs. Taylor, *ib.*; publishes "Father and Daughter," *ib.*; goes to Paris with her husband, 80; sees the First Consul at a review, 81; publishes "Adeline Mowbray," 84; her gift of pathos, *ib.*; Miss Mitford's recipe for "an Opie novel," 84, 85, *note*; visit to Southill, 85, 86; death of her husband, 87; affection for her sister-in-law, *ib.*; writes a memoir of her husband, 88; letter to, from Lady Charleville, 89; sees cannon planted in Hanover Square, *ib.*; at a soirée given by Madame de Staël, 90; "emperor-hunting," *ib.*; sings to Lady Sarah Napier, 91; describes a trick played by Lady Caroline Lamb at Lady Cork's, 92; attends John Gurney's funeral, 96; joins the Society of Friends, 97; letters to on the subject, from Lady Cork and Lady Charleville, 98, 99; at Freemasons' Tavern, 99; revisits Paris, *ib.*; her "Phrygian helmet" admired by the French artists, 100; sees La Fayette, *ib.*; tribute to her in Southey's "Colloquies," 101; returns to Paris in 1830, *ib.*; visit to Madame de Genlis, 102; welcomed by the Orleans family, 103; the Saint Simoniennes desire to convert her, 103; refuses to "make a story" for Mr. S. C. Hall, 104; characteristics of her writings, 105; notice of her in "Gossip of the Century," 105; her opinion of Mackintosh, 106; visit to Cornwall, *ib.*; view from St. Michael's Mount,

107; returns to Norwich, *ib.;* meets Dr. Chalmers, *ib.;* travels, 108; love of colour, *ib.;* last letter from Lady Cork, 109; dines at Miss Berry's, *ib.;* sits to Haydon, 110; drives home from the assizes in the high sheriff's coach, 110; her happy old age, 111; visits Claremont, *ib.;* plays *jeux de société* with Guizot, *ib.;* proposes a bath-chair race to Mary Berry at the first Great Exhibition, 112; visit from Fanny Kemble, *ib.;* death, *ib.;* her character in later life, 113

Orford, Earl of (*see* WALPOLE, HORACE)

Owenson, Olivia, juvenile attempt to take a portrait of Tom Moore, ii., 120; becomes a governess, 125; marries Sir Arthur Clarke, 126 (*see* CLARKE, LADY)

Owenson, Sydney, her parentage, ii., 115; school days in Dublin, 116; life at Kilkenny, 117; becomes a governess, 118; arrival at Bracklin Castle, 119; completes her first novel "St. Clair of the Isles," 120; its unexpected publication, *ib.;* goes to London, *ib.;* "The Novice of St. Dominic" published by Sir Richard Phillips, *ib.;* terms offered for the "Wild Irish Girl," 121; hostility of Croker, 122; second visit to town, *ib.;* first London rout, 123; description of Byron, *ib.;* odd scene with Kemble, *ib.;* attachment to Sir Charles Ormsby, 125; becomes companion to Lady Abercorn, 126; waltzes with Lord Hartington till she splits her shoes, 128; sits to Lawrence for her portrait, *ib.;* first meeting with Dr. Morgan, 129; her description of him, 130; pays a farewell visit to Dublin, 131; returns to Baron's Court, 132; married *à l'improviste, ib.* (*see* MORGAN, LADY)

Paganini, Niccolo, tells Lady Morgan his history, ii., 145

Palazzo, Count, escorts Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to Brescia, i., 149; detains her in his mother's country house, 151

Parma, Duchess of, i., 311

Pasta, Giudetta, her conversation with Lady Morgan, ii., 144

Paul, Mr. Kegan, his "Life of Godwin," ii., 37; on Mrs. Inchbald, 39; his description of Godwin's influence, 217

Pavilion, the, at Brighton, Lady Charleville's interview with the Prince Regent at, ii., 142
Payn, James, his recollections of Miss Mitford, ii., 203
Pendarves, Mrs. (*see* GRANVILLE, MARY), early married life, i., 169; scene in Windsor Park with M. Fabrici, 170; death of her husband, 171; at the coronation banquet in Westminster Hall, 173; describes her lovers, 174; correspondence with Wesley, 175–177; on Hogarth's painting, 177; visit to Ireland, 178; first impressions of Dr. Delany, *ib.*; corresponds with Swift, 180; running mad over shells, 182; marries Dr. Delany, 184 (*see* DELANY, MRS.)
Pepys, Samuel, description of the Duchess of Newcastle, i., 34; the Duke's plays, 36
Peterborough, Lord, at Bath, i., 86
Petersham, the Duke of Clarence's early hours at, i., 320; the Berrys at, 344; the churchyard at, 352
Phillips, Sir Richard, publishes Sydney Owenson's early novels, ii. 121; correspondence with her, *ib.*
Phipps, Mrs. Constantine (afterwards Lady Mulgrave), described by Lady Hervey, i., 91, 96
Piedmont, the Prince of, i., 320
Pierrepont, Evelyn, afterwards Earl of Dorchester and Duke of Kingston, father of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, i., 107; proposes his daughter as a toast at the Kit-Cat Club, 108; has her portrait painted for the club-room, 109; refuses Mr. Wortley Montagu's proposal for his daughter's hand, 112; marries Lady Belle Bentinck, 121; described by Lady Bute, 137, *note*; scene at his death-bed, 137
Pierrepont, Frances, married to the Earl of Mar, i., 121 (*see* MAR, COUNTESS OF)
Pierrepont, Lady Mary, her birth, i., 107; her ancestors, 108; appears at the Kit-Cat Club, *ib.*; at West Dean, 109; becomes acquainted with Anne Wortley Montagu, 110; with Edward Wortley Montagu, *ib.*; refuses the suitor favoured by her father, 114; elopes with Mr. Wortley Montagu, 115 (*see* MONTAGU, LADY MARY WORTLEY)
Pierrepont, Mrs., of West Dean, i., 109

Pitt, William (first Earl of Chatham), his praise of Mrs. Montagu, i., 231 ; his marriage, *ib.*
Pitt, William, describes Lord Balcarres, i., 278
Pomfret, Countess of, a correspondent of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, i., 144 ; letter to, *ib.*
Pope, Alexander, friendship for Molly Lepell, i., 81, 82 ; satire on Lord Hervey, 83 ; his "Homer," 126 ; his house at Twickenham, 136 ; his satire on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 139 ; alleged reasons for his quarrel with her, 139–142 ; his poem on the rustic lovers killed by lightning, 140 ; letters to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 141, *note ;* death of, 149
Port, Miss, of Ilam (great-niece of Mrs. Delany), refuses to open the door to George III., i., 199
Porter, Jane, a Lady Canoness of the Order of St. Joachim, ii., 135, *note*
Portland, Duchess of, letter to, from Mrs. Delany, i., 178 ; collects "land shells," 182 ; takes Mrs. Delany to visit the Garricks, 193 ; settles the marriage of Mary Dewes, 194 ; presents Mrs. Delany to Queen Charlotte, 197 ; her death, *ib. ;* letters from Miss Robinson to, 209, 210 ; character of, 217 ; children of, 218
Poynter, Dr., responsible for the destruction of Mrs. Inchbald's Memoirs, ii., 1
Princess Royal (daughter of George II.), marriage of, to the Prince of Orange, i., 181
Prussia, King of, grief for the death of his wife, i., 75
Pucklau Muskau, Prince, his visit to Lady Morgan, ii., 149 ; his description of her, 150 ; of the Clarke family, 151 ; Lady Morgan's relief at his departure, 152

Quarterly Review, establishment of, ii., 44
Queensbury, Duchess of (Prior's "Kitty, beautiful and young"), one of her Court costumes, i., 183, *note ;* described by Mrs. Delany, 190

Rémond, M., described by Saint-Simon, i., 133 ; speculates in South Sea stock, 134 ; quarrels with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 135 ; his farewell letter to her, *ib.*

Reveley, Mrs., refuses to marry Godwin, ii., 211
Richelieu, Duc de, befriends the Huguenot prisoners at Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's request, i., 148
Richmond Park, stag-hunts in, i., 136; Sir Charles Montagu's last drive in, ii., 159
Richmond Theatre, Mrs. Jordan at, i., 327
Robinson, Elizabeth, her birth, i., 206; early recollections, *ib.*; copies the *Spectator*, 207; love of dancing, 208; describes her father at a ball, 210; at Bath, 211; called "*Fidget*" by the Duchess of Portland, 212; her beauty, 215; describes her ideal lover, *ib.*; prefers a calf to a country swain, *ib.*; a greedy Dean, 216; life at Bulstrode, 218; her marriage, 219 (*see* MONTAGU, MRS.)
Robinson, "*Long Tom*," asked if he were "Robinson Crusoe," i., 205
Robinson, Matthew, dislikes the country, i., 207; forms a domestic debating society, 208
Robinson, Sarah, attacked by small-pox, i., 213; her unhappy marriage, 234
Rogers, Samuel, rebuked by Agnes Berry, i., 349; calls on Mrs. Inchbald, ii., 44
Ropes, Arthur R., on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, i., 119; on Mr. Wortley Montagu's despatches, 132
Ross, Janet, described by Omar, ii., 288
Rousseau, Jean Jacques, letter to Mary Dewes, i., 192
Royal Society, the, and the Duchess of Newcastle, i., 34
Rubens, house and museum of, at Antwerp, i., 17
Russell, Dr. William Howard, on Lady Duff Gordon, ii., 300; his visit to her, 301

Saint-Simon, Duc de, on M. Rémond, i., 133
Scott, Sir Walter, at Bath when a boy, i., 247; his friends at Balcarres, 271; identified as "the author of Waverley," *ib.*; mentions the authorship of "Auld Robin Gray" in "The Pirate," 281; asks permission to supply the "Bannatyne Club" with the true story of the ballad, 282; his description of Lady Charlotte Lindsay, 284; conversation with Mrs. Opie, ii., 94
Shelley, Harriet, visit to Godwin's family, ii., 217; pecuniary

transactions, 223; provision made for her by Shelley, 225; her body found in the Serpentine, 229

Shelley, Lady (wife of Sir Percy Shelley), affection for Mrs. Shelley, ii., 258; contributions to Shelley literature, *ib.*; residence at Field Place, *ib.*

Shelley, Mrs. (*see* GODWIN, MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT), her notes to her father's papers, ii., 33; description of Mrs. Inchbald, *ib.*; account of her father's friendship for Miss Alderson, 67; marriage, 229; reconciliation with her family, 230; acquaintance with the Leigh Hunts, *ib.*; residence in Italy, 231; deaths of Clara and William, *ib.*; letter to Mrs. Leigh Hunt, 232; new acquaintances, *ib.*; letters to Leigh Hunt, 236–245; arrival of Lieutenant Williams and his wife at Pisa, 245; scandalous reports, *ib.*; her defence of Shelley, addressed to Mrs. Hoppner, detained by Byron, 246; friendship for Trelawny, *ib.*; her despair at hearing of the disappearance of Shelley's boat, 249; broken-hearted at his loss, 250; takes a house at Genoa, 251; literary work, *ib.*; resolves to return to England, *ib.*; Byron's pecuniary meanness, *ib.*; dramatized version of "Frankenstein," *ib.*; allowance from Sir Timothy Shelley, 252; "pen-and-ink" portrait of her, *ib.*; letter to Trelawny on the death of Byron, 253; letter to Mrs. Leigh Hunt on Medwin's book, *ib.*; improved pecuniary position, 254; disappointed in Jane Williams, *ib.*; refuses to marry Trelawny, 255; love for her son, *ib.*; fascinated by Mrs. Norton, 256; death of her father, *ib.*; engaged in editing Shelley's works, *ib.*; her "Rambles in Germany and Italy," 257; death of Sir Timothy Shelley, 258; affection for her daughter-in-law, *ib.*; residence at Field Place with Sir Percy and Lady Shelley, *ib.*; death, 259

Shelley, Percy Bysshe, early life, ii., 216; correspondence with Godwin, 217; love for Mary Godwin, 219; persuades her to leave England with him, *ib.*; visits France and Switzerland, 222–223; arrangement with Sir Timothy Shelley, 225; vainly tries to discover Harriet, 229; her death, *ib.*; marriage to Mary Godwin, *ib.*; life at Marlow, 230; departure for Italy, 231; new friends, *ib.*; urges

Leigh Hunt to join him in Italy, at Byron's suggestion, 247; sails for Leghorn to meet him and his family, 248; drowned with Lieutenant Williams on their return, *ib.;* Byron's description of his character, 249; discovery and cremation of the bodies, *ib.;* burial at Rome, 250

Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, verses on Lady Margaret Fordyce, i., 280; buys Mrs. Inchbald's comedy *The Wedding Day*, 34; pays for it, *ib., note;* takes a house at Isleworth, 320

Siddons, Mrs., account of her reading at "the Queen's House," Windsor, i., 197; early struggles, ii., 12; her beauty, 13; plays "hide-and-seek" on Russell Moor, 14; cured of neuralgia by electricity, 43; visited by Miss Alderson, 68; admires Opie's conversation, 78, *note*

"*Simple Story*," the, criticized by Godwin, ii., 31; published by Robinson, 32; its great success, *ib.;* praised by Maria Edgeworth, 47; by Madame de Staël, 52

Simpson, Elizabeth, birth of, ii., 3; early youth, 4; endeavours to cure her stammer, *ib.;* aims at becoming an actress, *ib.;* admires Richard Griffith, *ib.;* refuses Mr. Inchbald's first offer, 5; runs away from home, 6; her beauty described by Boaden, *ib.;* strange adventures in London, 7; renews acquaintance with Mr. Inchbald, *ib.;* marries him, 8 (*see* INCHBALD, MRS.)

Simpson, George, leaves the farm for the stage, ii., 4; returns to Standingfield and fails disastrously, 27; shot in a duel at Hamburg, 36

Slender, Mr., brother-in-law of Elizabeth Inchbald, ii., 7; described by her, *ib., note*

Smith, James, his talent for improvisation, ii., 93

Smith, Sydney, letter to Mary Berry, i., 344, *note;* letter to Lucie Austin, ii., 265; praise of Mrs. Austin, 268–269

Southey, Robert, on Mrs. Opie's Quakerism, ii., 97; splendid eulogy of her, 101; on Mary Imlay and Godwin, 207

Staël, Albertine de (afterwards Duchesse de Broglie), visits Mrs. Inchbald, ii., 52; in attendance on her mother with a branch of laurel, 140

Staël, Madame de, marriage of, i., 311, *note;* as a girl, 312; character of, by Mary Berry, 338; her opinion of Miss

Berry, *ib.*; visits Mrs. Inchbald, ii., 52; dreadful death of her second son, 53; her admiration for Bernadotte, 90; her studied improvisations, 140; Comte de Rivarol's pun on her name, *ib.*

Stair, Lord, friend of M. Rémond, i., 133

Steele, Sir Richard, friend of Edward Wortley Montagu, i., 112

Stevenson, Sir John, introduces Moore to Sydney and Olivia Owenson, ii., 119

Stout, Sarah, Quakeress, found drowned in the Priory river, Hertford, i., 51; Spencer Cowper charged with her murder, *ib.*; her ghost said to haunt Hertford, 53; the Rev. J. Hinton's account of her death, *ib.*

Strathmore, Lady, her ingenious mode of bribery, i., 247

Strawberry Hill, Horace Walpole at, i., 306

Stuart, Lady Charles, odd mistake made by, i., 340

Stuart, Lady Louisa, on Lord and Lady Hervey, i., 84; story of her grandmother, 122; her account of the opposition to inoculation, 128; her version of Pope's quarrel with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 140

Stuart, Lord Herbert, engaged to Mrs. Opie, ii., 94, *note*

Stuart Princes, the, in Rome, i., 145

Suett, Richard, plays Rosencrantz and the Gravedigger to Mrs. Inchbald's Hamlet, ii., 9; sends her an offer of marriage, 19

Sussex, the Duke of, at a dinner-party, ii., 177

Sweden, the Queen of (wife of Bernadotte), mistaken for "the new governess," i., 341

Swift, Jonathan, Dean of St. Patrick's, friend of Dr. Delany, i., 180; letter to Mrs. Pendarves, 181

Taglioni, Marie, her "two rules," ii., 145, and *note*

Talfourd, Thomas Noon, his success foretold by Miss Mitford, ii., 177; his play of Ion, 192; last visit to Miss Mitford, 206; death, *ib.*; his analytical sketch of Godwin, 208

Talleyrand-Périgord, Charles Maurice de, Miss Berry's horror of, i., 338; described by Cosway, ii., 55

Talma, François Joseph, visits Mrs. Inchbald, ii., 52; at a Freemasons' Lodge, 142

Taranto, the Archbishop of, and his cats, ii., 146
Taylor, Mrs. John, Amelia Alderson's greatest friend, ii., 62; character of, by Basil Montagu, *ib.*; letter to, from Mrs. Opie, 75; description of Mrs. Opie's singing, 76; her daughter Sarah, 263
Teddington, residence of the Berrys at, i., 317, 318
Tennyson, Alfred, set to dig up a garden, ii., 203
Thackeray, William Makepeace, on the Court of George II., i., 47; on Mary and Agnes Berry, 348
Thrale, Mrs., conversation with Dr. Johnson, i., 249–251; tells Mrs. Montagu who wrote "Evelina," 252
Tooke, John Horne, tried for high treason, ii., 69; introduced to Miss Alderson, 70; his description of Opie's conversation, 78, *note*
Trelawny, Edward, becomes acquainted with the Shelleys, ii., 246; hears that Shelley's body is found, 249; his devotion to Mrs. Shelley and Mrs. Williams in their grief, *ib.*; his generosity and Byron's avarice, 251; wishes to marry Mrs. Shelley, 255
Tunbridge Wells, and Tunbridge town, i., 223; the Princess of Wales at, 337
Turin, a royal hunting-party at, i., 320
Twickenham, Pope and Molly Lepell at, i., 83; description of, by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 136; Pope's house and grotto at, *ib.*; residence of the Berrys at, 312; Tennyson's house at, offered to the Brownings, ii., 200

Viviani, Emilia (the heroine of "Epipsychidion"), her convent life, ii., 238
Voltaire, his Chinese tragedy, i., 234; attacks on Shakespeare, *ib.*; Mrs. Montagu's reply to, 237; Mrs. Montagu "not a friend of his," 246
Von Humboldt, Baron, conversation of, ii., 93; described by Lady Morgan, 141

Wales, Prince of (afterwards George II.), at the trial of the Jacobites, i., 65; reconciled to his father, 73; at the Drawing Room, 74; his hot temper, 121
Wales, Princess of (afterwards Queen Caroline), speech to

Lady Cowper, i., 59; education of her daughters, 70; opinion of her own knowledge of theology, *ib.*; quarrel with Lord Sunderland, 71; affection for the Duchess of Monmouth, *ib.*; reconciled to George I., 73; *Grandissime Comedienne*, 76; animosity to Lady Sarah Cowper, 77; attachment to Lord Hervey, 83; portrait of, by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 121; supports the introduction of inoculation, 128

Wales, Princess of (Caroline of Brunswick), Lady Charlotte Lindsay in her household, i., 284; described by Mary Berry, 336; confides in her, *ib.*; visits the Berrys at Tunbridge Wells, 337

Wales, Frederick Prince of, his favourite amusement, i., 97

Wales, the Prince and Princess of, their visit to Lady Duff Gordon, ii., 303

Walpole, Horace, on the Duke and Duchess of Newcastle, i., 32; on Lady Hervey, 106; visits Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 159; anecdote of Mrs. Montagu, 246; "foments the quarrel" between Mrs. Montagu and Dr. Johnson, 253; dines at Mrs. Montagu's "new palace," 256; on Lady Sarah Lennox, ii., 26, *note*; his "twin wives," 305; his description of them, 307; letter to Lady Ossory about his new friends, 313; first letter to Mary and Agnes Berry 314; on the "Arabian Nights," 316; on Hannah More, 317; his passion for Windsor Castle, 321; becomes Earl of Orford, 323; receives the Duchess of York at Strawberry Hill, 325; interested in General O'Hara, 327; failing health of, 329; death, *ib.*; his manuscripts bequeathed to the Berrys, 330

Walton, Dr., has Dr. Kennett's portrait painted as Judas Iscariot, i., 68

Warburton, Eliot, his marriage and tragic death, ii., 161

Warren, Dr., a friend of Mrs. Inchbald, ii., 29; his portrait, 30

Welbeck, race-course at, i., 36

Wellington, the Duke of, in Paris, i., 339; what he felt at Waterloo, *ib.*; his sons at Three Mile Cross, 183

Wesley, John, sentimental letters to Mrs. Pendarves, i., 174–176; dropped by her, 177